

Read **SIR A. CONAN DOYLE'S 'POISON BELT'**

Scoops

STORIES of the **WONDER-WORLD** of **TOMORROW**



A British Architect Plans—

Cities in the SKY

A Strange New Vision of the Town of To-morrow

A STARTLING proposal for a city with its houses and shops roved into the machine and fresh air of the sky was recently put forward by H. H. Womersley, the noted British architect. The architect's impression of such a city is given below.

Supported on great shafts of steel rising on massive foundations, the buildings would be connected by bridges for private motor traffic. Lower bridges, supporting the shafts, would carry goods traffic, and in the shaft's dumb-wells feet lifts would take passengers and goods to and from the towns in the sky.

All this would leave the ground free for gardens, recreation, and fresh roads for highway traffic between the towns.

A strange vision of tomorrow.

BRIDGES
CONNECTING
THE STRUCTURES

GIANT SUNSHINE
HOUSES WITH FLATS,
SHOPS AND PLACES
OF ENTERTAINMENT

AERIAL
LIGHTING

ROTATING TOWER
TO UTILISE WIND
CURRENTS FOR POWER

BRIDGES FOR
GOODS TRAFFIC

SHAFTS
OF STEEL

GIANT
POWER HOUSE

GROUND FREE FOR
FAST TRAFFIC

A Great Scientfiction Story by—

Sir Arthur CONAN DOYLE

The Tide of Death
Creeps over the Earth
When the World Swims
into—

One of the Best
Stories ever Written
by the World's Master
of Science Fiction!
Begins To-day

The POISON Belt

★ "THE BLURRING OF THE LINES"

IT is imperative that you at once, while the stupendous events are still close in my mind, I should set them down with that exactness of detail which time may blur. But even as I do so, I am overwhelmed by the wonder of the fact that it should be our little group of the "Lost World"—Professor Challenger, Professor Summerlee, Lord John Roxton, and myself—who have passed through this amazing experience.

When, some years ago, I embarked in the *Redly Gazette* on each ranking journey in South America, I little thought that it would prove laid on my leg to sell an even stranger personal experience, one which is unique in all human annals, and must stand out in the records of history as a great peak among the fantastic fables which surround it. The events itself will always be remembered, but the circumstances that we four were together at the time at this extraordinary episode cause shock in a most refined and refined, veritable fashion. I will recount the events which led up to it as shortly and as clearly as I can, though I am well aware that the fuller the detail upon such a subject, the more welcome it will be to the reader.

It was upon Friday, the twenty-seventh of November—a day for some seasons in the history of the world—that I went down to the office of my paper and asked for three days' leave of absence from Mr. McArthur, who now presided over our news department. The good and not very stoutish man, who had attended his astounding things of oddity and had fairly put his reluctance into words.

I was thinking Mr. Malone, that we would enjoy you in advancing these days. I am thinking there was a story that you were a bit of a man that could handle."

"I am sorry," said I, "Of course, if I am needed, there is an end of the matter. But the engagement was important and intimate. If I could be spared—"

"Well, I don't see that you can."

It was bitterly disappointing, but I had to put the last face I could upon it. After all, it was my own fault, for I should have known by this time that a gentleman has as right to make plans of his own.

"Then I'd think as more of it," said I, with as much cheerfulness as I could assume.

"What was it that you wanted me to do?"

"Well, it was just to interview that devil of a wash-down at Rothfield."

"You don't mean Professor Challenger?"

"Aye, it's just him that I do mean. He was young John Scarsden, of the *Examiner*, a noble fellow, the high road had work by the collar of his coat and the shock of his hair. You'll have read of it, I think, in the police report. Our boys would as soon interview a loose alligator in the Zoo. But you could see it, I'm thinking—an old friend like you."

"Aye," said I, greatly relieved, "then I'll make it all right. It so happens that it was to visit Professor Challenger at Rothfield that I was asking for leave of absence. The fact is that it is the anniversary of our main adventure on the plateau three years ago, and he has asked our whole party down to his house to see him and celebrate the occasion."

"Capital!" cried McArthur, rubbing his hands and looking through his glasses. "Then you will be able to get his opinions out of him. In any other case I would say it was all nonsense, but the fellow has made good sense, and who knows but he may say—"

"Get what out of him?" I asked.

"What he has been doing!"

"Haven't you seen his letter on 'Scientific Possibilities' in today's *Times*?"

"No."

McArthur closed down and picked a copy from the rack.

"Read it aloud," said he, indicating a column with his finger. "I'd be glad to hear it again, but I am not sure now that I have the man's meaning clear in my head."

This was the letter which I read to the news editor of the *Gazette*—

SCIENTIFIC POSSIBILITIES

"So,—I have read with amazement, not wholly unshared with some less complimentary sources, the comprehensive and wholly famous letter of James Watson MacPhail, which has lately appeared in your columns upon the subject of the blurring of the lines between the human and the animal."

He discusses the matter as of no significance. To a writer of intelligence it may well seem of very great possible importance—as great as to involve the elements of every man, woman, and child upon this planet. I can hardly hope, by the use of scientific language, to convey any sense of my meaning to those unfortunates who gather their news from the columns of a daily newspaper. I will endeavor, therefore, to condense to these foundations, and to indicate the magnitude by the use of a homely analogy which will be within the limits of the intelligence of your readers."

"Man, he's a wonder—a living wonder!" said McArthur, shaking his head vigorously. "He'd put up the feathers of a cockney dove set up a rat in a Quaker's vesting. No wonder he has made London for but for him. Well, he's been one member."

"We will suppose," I said, "that a small bundle of connected rocks was launched on a zigzag current upon a voyage across the Atlantic. The rocks drift slowly on from day to day with the same conditions all

The Coming of a Cosmic Change

For the rest of the journey he entertained—or failed to entertain—as by a succession of bird and animal cries.



around them. If the world were ancient we could imagine that they would consider three conditions to be permanent and unaltered. But we, with our superior knowledge, know that many things might happen to surprise the gods. They might possibly desert us against a ship, or a sleeping whale, or become laughed in scorned. In any case, their voyage would probably end by their being thrown up on the rocky coast of Lalandia. But what could they know of all this while they drifted so gently day by day in what they thought was a fearless and lone greenish coast?

Your readers will possibly unperceived that the Atlantic, in this period, stands for the eighth sense of ether through which we drift, and that the launch of cosmic represents the little and obscure planetary system to which we belong. A third race man, with its raging and belated of magnificent satellites, we find under the same dirty conditions Lalandia. These conditions are, since equal conditions which will overwhelm us in the ultimate confessions of space, where we are swept over on others, Niagara, or dashed upon some antihelical Lalandia. I ask no more here for the shallow and ignorant opinions of your correspondents, Mr. James Wilson Macphail, but my sense why we should march with a very close and informed attention every indication of change in this cosmic surroundings upon which our own ultimate fate may depend.

"Now, he'd have made a grand narrator," said McArthur. "It just looks like

an opera. Let's get down to what it is that's troubling him."

"The general warning and shifting of Fraumüller's bases of the spectrum point, in my opinion, to a widespread cosmic change of a subtle and sinister character. Light from a planet in the reflected light of the sun. Light from a star is a self-produced light. But the spectra both from planets and stars have, in this instance, all undergone the same change. Is it, then, a change in these planets and stars? To me such an idea is inconceivable. What cosmic change could simultaneously come upon them all? Is it a change in our own atmosphere? It is possible, but in the highest degree improbable, since we are no sign of it around us. What, then, is the third possibility? That it may be a change in the conducting medium, in that infinitely fine ether which extends from star to star and pervades the whole universe. Deep in that ocean we are floating upon a slow current. Right that current and drift in into belts of ether which are novel and have properties of which we have never dreamed? There is a change somewhere. This cosmic disturbance of the spectrum proves it. It may be a good change. It may be an evil one. It may be a neutral one. We do not know. Shallow observers may treat the matter as one which can be disregarded, but the deeper realization of the true philosophy will understand that the possibilities of the universe are uncalculable, and that the wisest man is he who holds himself ready for the unexpected.

To take an obvious example, who would undertake to say that the mysterious and universal outbreak of flames which is recorded in your columns this very morning is having homes and among the independent races of America has no connection with some cause, thereby to which they may respond more quickly than the more complex people of Europe? I shoveled out the idea for what it is worth. We accept it as, in the present stage, as respectable as to deny it, but it is an extraordinary possibility who is too dense to perceive that it is well within the bounds of a possible connection. Very faithfully,
—GEORGE EDWARD CHALLENGER.

"The Drums, Rotterdam,"
"It's a fine, astounding letter," said McArthur, thoughtfully, sitting a cigarette into the long glass tube which he used as a holder. "What's your opinion of it, Mr. Nelson?"

I had to confess my total and breathtaking ignorance of the subject at once. "What, for example, were Fraumüller's lectures on?" Mr. Will had just been studying the matter with the aid of our latest scientist at the office, and he peered from his desk top of these many-colored spectral bands which bear a general resemblance to the betwixtness of some young and ambitious cricket club. He pointed me to me that there were certain black lines which formed cross-hairs upon the series of brilliant colors extending from the red at one end, through gradations of orange, yellow, green, blue, and indigo, to the violet at the other.

"Those dark bands are Fraumüller's lines," said he. "The colors are just light itself. Every light, if you run apart it up with a prism, gives the same analysis. They tell us nothing. It is the fact that each, because they vary according to what it may be that produces the light. It is these lines that have been altered instead of clear this last week, and all the astronomers have been quarreling over the reason. Here's a photograph of the altered lines for our time to observe. If the public here takes no interest in the matter up to now, but this letter of Challenger's in the Times will make them wake up, I'm thinking."

"And how about Bernstein?"
"Well, it's a long way from a married man in a spectrum to a man sipping in Geneva. And yet the cloud has shown an area before that he knows what he's talking about. There is some queer change down under, and to-day there's a whole lot more in it. Suppose that the Hydrogen atom is all dark in the Stratos of Sweden, and two steps on the beach in consequence. Anyhow, it's good enough for you to interview Challenger upon it. If you get anything definite, let us hear a column by Mackay."

I was waiting out from the news editor's room, waiting until my new article had been read, when I heard of my name called from the waiting-room below. It was a telegram-boy with a wire which had been forwarded from my lodgings at Strachan. The message was from the very man we had been discussing, and ran thus:—

"Malone, 11, Hall Street, Strachan.—Bring message to CHALLENGER."

"Bring message?" The problem, as I remembered him, had an elephantine nose of hammer shape of the most clumsy and unworldly grandfathers. Was this one of those jokes which used to reduce him to apoplectic laughter, when his eyes would droop and he was all going north and wagging head, apparently indifferent to the gravity of all around him? I turned the words over, but could make nothing else, possibly, good out of them. Then surely it was in order—though a very strange one. It was the last man in the world whose delicate order I should care to disobey. Possibly some chemical experiment was about, possibly—well, it was no business of mine to speculate upon why he wanted it. I made out the words, and, as I heard him, I should not let the train at Victoria. I took a taxi, and, having ascertained the address from the telephone book,

London in the Grip of Madness

I made for the Oxygen Tank Supply Company in Oxford Street.

As I alighted on the pavement at my destination two youths emerged from the door of the establishment carrying an trunk, episode, which, with some loquacity, they hoisted into a waiting motor-car. An elderly man was at their heels, holding and directing in a creaky, assonant voice. He turned towards me. There was no mistaking those eastern features and that guttural hoarse, I was my old, once grizzled companion, The former *franc-tireur*.

"What?" he cried. "Have you had one of those preposterous telegrams for oxygen?"

"Well, well! I have had one, two, and even one, very much against the grain, I have acted upon it. Our good friend is an exhorter as ever. The word could not have been so urgent that he need direct the stated means of supply and increase upon the lips of those who are really better than himself. Why could he not order it down?"

"I could only suggest that he probably needed it at once."

"Still, for some reason he seems to wish that I should bring none, too. It will be safer to do exactly what he tells me."

Accordingly, in spite of many gradations and circumstances from Samarine, I ordered an additional life, which was played with the other in his cemetery, for he had offered one a life to Vietnam.

I turned away to pay off my taxi, the driver of which was very understanding and patient with him here. As I came back to Pioneer Memorial, he was having a vigorous altercation with the men who had carried down the crosses, his little white goat's head peering with indignation. One of the fellows called him, I remember, "a silly old bleached cockroach" which we regarded him dearer than he himself was out of him to take the part of his insulted mother, and it was all we could do to prevent a riot in the street.

These little things may seem trivial to relate, and passed as mere incidents at the time. It is only now, as I look back, that I see their relation to the whole story which I have to unfold.

The chaotic mob, as it seemed to me, have been a success, or else I am lost. I have arrived in this destination, for I have only to go to the station. Then we started with the crowd, their equal strength, and I remember distinctly to have seen that the standard of living in London had very much declined, there was the very edge of a great crowd which was watching a fight at the corner of the Mall. The people, who were much excited, raised cries of anger at the noisy driving, and one fellow young upon the step and waved a stick above his head. I pushed

...off, but as we were
glad when we had got
clear of them and
went out of the park.
These little events,
coming one after the
other, left me very
tired in my room,
and I could no longer
my companion's per-
sonal manner that his
own country did not
seem to have with the
English.

But — good in-
crease — instead
with — now Lord
John, Prince waiting
for — upon the pho-
tograph, his tall, thin
figure clad in a yellow
tweed — shooting red
flashes from his eyes, with
dark, handsome
features —

again, as Goro and yet no heartbreak, flushed with pleasure at the sight of us. Hisuddy bear was that with gray, and the furrows upon his brow had been cut a little deeper by Time's chisel, but in all else he was the Lord John who had been our good comrade in the past. He reacted with amazement when he saw the ovypara cylinders upon the porter's trolley behind us.

"So you've got them, too?" he cried.
"More or less the same. Whoever can the old
deer be after?"

"Have you seen his letter in the Times?" I asked.

"Still and serene!" said Sumner.

"Well, it's at the bottom of this oxygen business, as I am mistaken," said I.

"Staff and servants!" cried Hernandez again, with quite unnecessary violence.

We had all got into a first class smoker, and he had already lit the sheet and charred the lower part which seemed to sear the end of his long, aristocratic nose.

"Friedrich Challenge is a clever man," said he, with great volubility. "No one can deny it. It's a fact that denies it. Look at his hat. There's a sixty-curve brim inside it—a big engine, running smooth, and turning out clean work. Show for the engine-house and I'll tell you the size of the engine."

But he is a born characterist—people heard me tell him so to his face—he's born characterist with a kind of dramatic flair of jumping into the limelight. Things are quiet, so fitted Challenger took a chance to get the public talking about him. You don't imagine that he seriously believes all this nonsense about a change in the ether and a danger to the human race? Was ever such a cock and bull story as this life?"

He sat like an old white man, croaking and shaking with nervous laughter.

A wave of anger passed through me as I listened to Superville. It was dramatic that he should speak thus of the leader who had been the source of all our fears and grown to such an experience as no one here could expect. I had opened my mouth to utter some hot retort when Lord John got between

"You had a scrap once before with old man Challenger," said he, slowly, "and you were down and out inside ten seconds. It

mean to me, Professor Summerby, he's beyond your class, and the best you can do with him is to leave him alone."

"Besides," said I, "he has been a good friend to every one of us. Whatever his faults may be, I don't believe he ever speaks evil of his comrades behind their backs."

"Well, mad, young Ishihashi, my lad," said Lord John Bordon. "Then, with a kindly smile, he slapped Professor Sumner's upon his shoulder. "Dance, Herr Professor, we're not going to quarrel at this time of day. We've seen too much together. But keep off the grass when you get near Challenge, for this young Ishihashi and I have a bit of a wagership for the old deer."

Doc Summerville was in no humor for company. His face was carved up in rigid disapproval, and thick curls of angry smoke rolled up from his pipe.

"As to you, Lord John Houston," he remarked, "your opinion upon a matter of science is of an equal value to my own as my views upon a new type of that you would be as yours. I have my own judgment, sir, and I use it in my own way. Because a law

ailed me once in that way, once when I should accept without criticism anything, however far fetched, which then can only be said to put forward? Am we to have a Pope of science, with infallible decisions laid down or outside, and accepted without question by the faithful? I tell you, no, that there is a risk in my name, and that should I ever fall out to be a Pope, I shall have done me well. If it please you to believe this, I agree with other and Emerson to draw upon the spectrum, do as by all means, let do not ask one who is older and wiser than yourself to submit to your folly.

It is not evident that if the ether were absorbed in the degree which he mentioned, and if it were conducive to human health, the result of it would already be apparent upon mankind. I have been plagued with

Yes, we should absolutely be very far from our natural selves, and instead of sitting quietly discussing scientific problems in a railway train we should be showing actual symptoms of the poison which was working within us. Where do we see any trace of this poisonous cause, disturbance?

I felt more and more sorry. There was

We nearly had collisions with other equally erratic vehicles. The people's outbursts of anger at the clumsy driving, and one fellow sprang upon the step and waved a stick above our heads.



The Strange Conduct of Professor Challenger

something very irritating and aggressive in Sumner's demeanor.

"I think that if you know more about the facts you might be less positive in your opinion," said I.

Sumner took his pipe from his mouth and held me with a steady stare.

"Pray, what do you mean, sir, by that somewhat surprised observation?"

"I mean that when I was leaving the office the news editor told me that a telegram had come in confirming the general opinion of the Sumner critics and adding that the lights had not been lit in the Strata of Russia."

"Really, there should be some lantern to human folly!" cried Sumner, in a good-humored way. "Is it possible that you do not realize that either, if for a moment we adopt Challenger's peremptory supposition, is a natural substance which in the same way as at the other side of the world?" Do you

for an instant suppose that there is an Englishman and a Sumner there? Perhaps you imagine that the other of Kent is in some way superior to the other of Surrey, through which this town is now being gas. There really are no bounds to the credulity and ignorance of the average layman. Is it conceivable that the other in Sumner should be as clearly as to come into immediacy at the very time when the other has had an appreciable effect upon us whatever? Personally, I was truly my that I never felt better in my life."

"That may be. I don't profess to be a scientific man," said I. "Though I have heard somewhere that the science of our generation is really the folly of the next. But it does not take much common sense to see that as we seem to have so little about either it might be affected by some local conditions in various parts of the world, and might show an effect over there which would only develop later with us."

"With 'might' and 'may' you can prove anything," cried Sumner. "Pigs may fly. Yes, sir, pigs may fly—but they don't. It is no worth arguing with you. Challenge me, but I will not argue with you. You are both incapable of reason. I had as soon try arguments before some railway engine."

"I must say, Professor Sumner, that your manner do not seem to have improved since I last had the pleasure of meeting you," said Lord John, severely.

"You dealings are not accounted to bear the truth," Sumner answered, with a bitter smile. "It comes in a lot of a way, does it not, when someone makes you realize that your title leaves you none the less a very ignorant man?"

"Upon my word, sir," said Lord John, very stern and rigid. "If you were a younger man you would not dare to speak to me in so offensive a fashion."

Sumner thrust out his chest, with its little wagging tail of gesture bared.

"I would have you know, sir, that, young or old, there has never been a time in my life when I was afraid to speak my mind to an ignorant creature—you, as an ignorant creature, if you had no disabilities as does could insist and insist upon it."

For a moment Lord John's eyes blazed, and then, with a tremendous effort, he mastered his anger and looked back to him with as much folded and a bitter smile upon his face. To me all this was dreadful and deplorable. Like a wave, the anxiety on the past swept over me, the good comradeship, the happy, adventurous days—all that we had suffered and passed for and was that it should have come to this—to me and to Alan! Suddenly I was seeking-solution in food, getting, unaccountably, some work referred to be consumed. My own parents looked at me in surprise. I covered up, face with my hands.

"It's all right," said I. "Only—only it is such a sad pity."

"You're fit, young fellow, that's what's

amiss with you," said Lord John. "I thought you were gone from the first."

"Your hobby, sir, have not needed since I saw you last," said Sumner, shaking his head. "I also observed you strange manner the moment we met. You need not waste your sympathy, Lord John. These two are alcoholics. The man has been drinking. By the way, Lord John, I called you a reasonable part man, which was, perhaps, wisely so. But the word reminds me of a small acquaintance, friend not naming, which I used to mention. You know me as the average man of science. Can you believe that I once had a well-developed reputation in several universities as a ferocious imbecile? Would it amuse you to hear me crow like a cock?"

"No, sir," said Lord John, who was still greatly offended; "it would not amuse me."

"My imitation of the clucking hen who had just laid an egg was also contained rather above the average. Might I venture?"

"No, sir, no—certainly not."

But in spite of the current prohibitions, Professor Sumner had drawn his pipe and for the rest of our journey he continued—so failed in its intention—by a succession of loud and excited remarks which earned no other than my tears were suddenly changed into howling laughter, which made him become quite hysterical, as I set against this grave Professor and saw him—or rather heard him—over the character of the uproarious roars or the puppy whose tail had been trodden upon. Once Lord John passed across his newspaper, upon the margin of which he had written in pencil, "This devil! Mad as a hatter!" No doubt it was very accurate, and yet the professor struck me as extraordinarily clever and amusing.

Whilst this was going on Lord John leaned forward and told me some extraordinary story about a huffalo and an Indian which which seemed to me to have neither beginning nor end. Professor Sumner had just begun to discuss like a cunny, and Lord John to get to the climax of his story, when the train came up at Jersey Dock, which had been given us as the station for Rochester.

And there was Challenger too. As his appearance was pleasant. Not all the thirty-eights in existence could match the slow, high-stepping dignity with which he padded his own railway station, and the haughty smile of condescension with which he regarded everybody around him. If he had changed in anything since the days of old it was that his joints had become accustomed. The huge head and great strong of forehead, with its plastered lock of black hair, seemed even greater than before. His black hair poured forward in a mass impressive cascade, and his clear grey eyes, with their innocent and steady gleam, were even more majestic than of yore.

He gave me the second probability and encouraging smile which the headmaster bestowed upon the small boy, and, having greeted the others and looked at our luggage and their splendors of luggage, he stood up and there away in a large motor car which was driven by the same expensive driver, the man of few words, whom I had seen in the chariot of battle upon the occasion of my first awful visit to the Professor. Our journey led us up a winding hill through scattered country. I sat in front with the chauffeur, but behind me my three comrades seemed to me to be all talking together. Lord John was still struggling with his baggage store, so far as I could make out, while once again I had the deep rumble of Challenger and the impatient accents of Sumner in my high and hoarse scientific debate. Suddenly Alan started his submachine gun towards me without taking his eyes from his steering-wheel.

"I'm under attack," said he.

"Dear me!" said I.

Everything seemed strange to-day. Everything said again, unexpressed things. It was like a dream.

"It's forty-seven times," said Alan, incorrectly.

"What do you get?" I asked, for want of some better observation.

"I don't get," said Alan.

"The professor seemed to have coded this, but possibly he came back to it."

"If I was to go, who would look after 'em?" He pointed his hand towards the motor. "Who would 'e get to serve 'em?"

"Someone else," I suggested loudly.

"Not 'e. No one would stay a watch. If I was to go, that one would run down the line and with the moustache out. I'm taking you because you're to drink, and you ought to know. If I was to take 'em to it, I would, but there, I wouldn't have the 'unt. It and the minute would be like two halves left out in a battle. I'm past everything. And there 'e goes and gives me notice."

"Why would he not stay?" I asked.

"Well, they wouldn't make allowances, even as I do. It's a very clever man, the motorist, so clever that 'e's been buried seven times. I've seen 'em right off 'is car, and so on. Well, look what 'e did this morning."

"What did he do?"

Alan looked over to me.

"I bet the 'champion,' said he, is a human whipper."

"Is he?"

"Yes, sir. But 'e's on the leg. I saw 'e with my own eyes whipping and 'opping down the drive."

"Good gracious!"

"So you'd say, sir, if you could see none of the gang. 'E don't make friends with the neighbors. There's none of them thinks that when 'e's up among these motorists you want about it is not just 'em, 'em, 'em, 'em. For the matter, and 'e was never in this company. That's what 'e's on. But I've served 'em ten years, and I've heard of 'em, and mind you, 'e's a good hand, when all's said and done, and 'e's as honest as a soldier. But 'e does dry one cruel at times. Now look at that, sir. That ain't what you might call old-fashioned hospitality, is it now? Just you said it for yourself."

The car as its latest speed had gained its way up a rising, rocky, moor. At the corner a magnificent green oak, a well-chopped hedge, the Austin coach, it was not difficult to read, for the words were in it and amazing."

WARNING.

Violence, Profanity, and Misbehavior

are not encouraged.

G. K. CHALLANGER.

"No, it's not what you might call 'cute,'" said Alan, shaking his head and glancing up at the dyspeptic pleistocene. "It wouldn't do him well at a classroom. I bet your father, sir, he's a better one, but as well as that he was a long time, but today my feelings seem to have got the better of me. I can not see that 'e's like to this day, but I can't go on, and that's that. 'I'm 'em and 'e's my master, and so it will be I expect to the end of his chapter."

We had moved between the white posts of a gate and up a curving drive, lined with rhododendrons and laurels. Beyond stood a low black house, peeped out with white windows, very comfortable and pretty. Mrs. Challenger, a small, dainty, smiling figure, stood in the open doorway, to welcome us.

"Well, my dear," said Challenger, bounding out of the car. "Are we not visitors. It is something new for us to have visitors, is it not? No host, between me and our neighbors, is there? If they could get no pleasure out of our habit, I expect it would be there."

"It's dreadful—dreadful!" said the lady, between laughter and tears. "Blessed

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The idea will be made the property of the reader. No manuscript or drawing can be returned. No telephone calls or visits to our office. No idea will be published from the 1st of May to the 1st of June.

First Selection of Ideas

POTATO SLICER

Procure a thin metal rod and cut a screw thread on it. Make a hook at one end and fix a nut on the other. Fix a cutting edge on a thin piece of metal and fix a small handle on one end, and drill a hole to take the rod in the other. Slide the nut over the rod and slide.

Now attach the potato to be sliced on to the rod, screw on the nut until it reaches the potato, and then begin turning the small handle. The cutting edge will cut the potato into thin slices.—*Haring Manning, Bournemouth. Winning Idea, 10/6.*

TAKING OFF ENAMEL

ENAMEL is difficult to scrape off a job for the purpose of re-enamelling. It will be easier if a percentage of potato is dissolved in water, and applied to the enamel.—*James Healdy, Walsack. Award of 2/6.*

heart, was still deeply shocked, and he seemed to be under the influence of some strong movement.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "this is indeed an interesting transaction, and I take pleasure in witnessing it. I am sure that you have had a splendid opportunity. May I ask if you have observed anything upon your journey from town?"

"The only thing which I observed," said Sumner, "with a sour smile, "was that our young friend here has not improved in his manners during the years that have passed. I am sorry to state that I have had a somewhat peculiar opinion of his conduct in the town, and I should be wanting in frankness if I did not say that it has left a most unpleasant impression on my mind."

"Well, well, we all get a bit given sometimes," said Lord John. "The young folks want no harm. After all, he's an international, so if he takes half an hour to devote a game of football he has more right to be than most folk."

Half an hour to devote a game? "I cried indignantly. "What is it you say that both half an hour with some long story about a football? Professor Sumner will be my witness."

"I can hardly judge which of you was the most utterly wrongheaded," said Sumner. "I declare to you, Challenger, that I never wish to hear of football or of footballs so long as I live."

"I have never said one word to this about football," I protested.

Lord John gave a short whistle and Sumner shook his head sadly.

"So early in the day, now," said he. "It is indeed deplorable. As I sat there at midday thought I was—"

In silence," cried Lord John. "Why,

OLD CORKS MAKE A BATH MAT

Remove and fix a square of osman wood, setting in a framework of thin square wood.



and push similar round corks into the holes of the wire setting until they are firm.
This will make a good bath mat.—*John Hamble, Gresham. Award of 2/6.*

USE FOR OLD GRAMOPHONE NEEDLES

A CRUMPLED design of old gramophone needles pushed into a vertical channel of wood will make a useful tray for your slacks for the house.—*St. Retish, London, S.W. 17. Award of 2/6.*

USE YOUR SHAVING BRUSHES

There are a variety of uses to which the ordinary shaving brush can be put. Their size and shape make them excellent for dusting such things as ornaments, and type writers, then brushes reaching little ridges and corners a stick of wood, covered by other brushes.—*R. Jeffery, Runcorn. Award of 2/6.*

It shows quarrelling with everyone. We haven't a friend on the outside now."

"It would be to concentrate my attention upon my inseparable wife," and Challenger, passing his hand, then took her hand. "For a girl and a gentle, and you have the year of three. I am sure, these gentlemen are tired from a journey, and patience should be ready. His hand returned."

The lady shook her head carefully, and the Professor laughed loudly and shook his head in his maternal fashion.

"Austin," he cried, "when you have put up the car you will kindly help your mother to lay the lunch. Now, gentlemen, will you please stop here for study for three or four or two very good things which I am anxious to say to you."

* THE TIDE OF DEATH

As we entered the hall the telephone bell rang, and we were the involuntary audience of Professor Challenger's end of the evening dialogue. I say "end," but no one within a hundred yards could have failed to hear the booming of that tremendous voice which resounded through the house. His audience lingered in my mind.

Yes, yes, of course, it is I. Yes, certainly, the Professor Challenger, the famous Professor, who else? ... Of course, every word of it, otherwise I should not have written it. ... I shouldn't be surprised. ... There is every indication of it. ... Within a day or so at the farthest.

Well, I can't help that, can I? Very unpleasant, no doubt, but I rather like it well after some important people than you. There is no use whining about it. ... No, I couldn't possibly. You must take your chance. ... That's enough, and I have something more important to do than to listen to such twaddle."

He shut off with a crash and led us up stairs into a large airy apartment which formed his study. On the great antiquary desk, on either side of which stood two large

"Heady," he said, as he gathered them up, "it would save my correspondence's trouble if I had a telegraphic address. Possibly 'Mosh, Rutherford,' would be the most appropriate."

As usual, when he made an obscure joke he leaned against his desk and followed in a series of long, low, hand, shaking as if he could hardly open the envelopes.

"Mosh! Mosh!" he gasped, with a face of content, while Lord John and I looked at each other, and Sumner like a doggy to get, wagged his head in unending disagreement. Finally, Challenger began to open his telephone, and the three of us stood in the long narrow room, our eyes fixed on the door as the significant word.

It was certainly worth looking at. The room, in its profile curves, had really thought to be a considerable elevation—some hundred feet, as an alternative discovery. Challenger's house was on the very edge of the hill, and from his southern face, in which was the study window, one looked across the wide stretch of the meadow to where the middle street of the South Downs turned an undulating horizon. In a dell at the foot of a bank of rocks marked the position of Lovers' Glade, and at one foot there lay a rolling plain of heather, with the long, vivid green slopes of the Cornborough golf course, all dotted with the players. A little to the north, through an opening in the meadow, we could see a section of the main line down London to Brighton. In the immediate foreground, and over our nose, was a small enclosed yard in which stood the one stone laid brought in from the station.

An explanation from Challenger came at times. He had read his telephone and had arranged them in a little methodical pile upon his desk. His head, ragged hair, or a scab of it as was visible over the metal

you were deaf? a small ball case of radius from all the day—now like a reborn gramophone than a man.

Sumner he drew himself up in better protest.

"Yes, are pleased to be here, Lord John," and he with a face of vinegar.

"Why, look it all, this is also wonderful," cried Lord John. "Each of us seems to know what the other does, and none of us knows what he did himself. Let's put it all together from the first. We got into a first class smoking, that a clear, and it's. ... Then we began to quarrel over Lord Challenger's letter in the Times."

"Oh, you did, did you?" roared our host, his eyelids beginning to drop.

"You said, Sumner, that there are no possible truth in his statements."

"Dear me," said Challenger, peering out his chest and stroking his beard. "No possible truth! I seem to have heard the words before. And say I ask what, exactly, the great and learned Professor Sumner proceeded to do, the terrible individual who had ventured to express an opinion upon a matter of scientific possibility? Perhaps, before he understood that unfortunate necessity, he will understand to give some reason for the adverse view which he has formed."

He bowed and shrugged and spread his open hands as he spoke with his elaborate and elaborate manner.

"The room was simple enough," said the dogged Sumner. "I contended that, if the other surrounding the north was so toxic on one quarter that it produced diagnostic symptoms, it was hardly likely that we three in the railway carriage should be entirely unaffected."

The explanation only brought spectators

Predicting the End of the World

Neurological Exam: Challenged. He laughed until everything in the room seemed to vibrate and quake.

The first person, possibly Beaumontier, is not for the first time, somewhat out of touch with the facts of the situation," and he at last, moving his brow. "Now, gentlemen, I think make my point better than by detailing to you what I have already done this morning. You will the more easily realize my mental condition after some other part when you realize that I am now in possession of my balance has been detailed. We have had for some years on our household a housekeeper—one Sarah, with whose second name I have never attempted to burden my memory. She is a woman of a severe and forbidding aspect, grim and dense as her countenance, very repulsive in her nature, and never without some expression of scorn or signs of any emotion. As I sat alone at my breakfast—Mrs. Challenger leaves her room at a morning—a suddenly entered my head that it would be entertaining and instructive to see whether I could find any limits to this woman's imperturbability. I directed a servant to go to her room and bring up such a small vase of flowers which stood near the center of the cloth. I rang the bell and slipped under the table. She noticed, and, seeing the room empty, imagined that I had withdrawn to the study. As I had expected, she approached and leaned over the table to replace the vase. I had a vision of a reflection in the glass, of a face, of a head, of a body, trading my head, I mark you, beneath the cuff of her leg. The conversation was successful.

ful beyond belief. For some moments she stood paralyzed, staring down at my head. Then, with a shiver, she tore herself free and rushed from the room. I pursued her with some thoughts of an explanation, but she flew down the stairs, and mere minutes afterwards I was able to pick her out with my field glasses travelling very rapidly in a north-westerly direction. I tell you the moments for which it is worth. Is it dramatic? Yes it conveyed anything to your minds? What do you think of it, Lord John?

Lord John shook his head gravely.

You'll be gettin' into serious trouble some of these days if you don't get a brake on," said he.

"Drop all work instantly and take three months in a German watering place," said he.

"Profound? Profound!" cried Chatterbox. "Now, Mr Malone, is it possible that wisdom may come from you when you write have so equally failed?"

"And it did, I say it with all modesty, but it did. Of course, it all seems obvious enough to you who know what occurred, but it was not so very clear when everything was new. But it came on me suddenly with the full force of conviction."

Then, when at last the word, my mind
flashed back over the whole morning's un-
perturbed, past Lord John with his buffoon,
past his own hysterical tears, and the con-

regions conduct of Professor Sumner, to the queer happenings in London, the sea in the park, the driving of the chauffeur, the quarrel at the supper warehouse. Everything fitted suddenly into its place.

"Of course," I used again. "It, he
promises. We are all promised."

"'Specially,' and Challenger, rubbing his hands, 'we are all possessed. One planet has come into the present belt of ether, and is now flying through it at the rate of some millions of miles a minute. Our young friend has expressed the cause of all our troubles in a single word. "Fusion."'

We looked at each other in silence. No comment seemed to meet the situation.

[illegible]

"I'll look out for that buffalo," said Lord John.

“ And I for the football match ”

"It may be that you are right, Challenger," said Mortimer, in a chastened voice. "I am willing to admit that my part is small in itself, rather than constructive, and that I am not a really honest or very true thing, only when it happens to be so unusual and fantastic as this case. However, as I put my mind back over the events of the morning, and as I remember the conduct of my companion, I find it easy to believe that some portion of an evening's work was necessary for these reasons."

Challenger slapped his colleague upon the shoulder. "We progress," said he, "Decidedly we progress."

"And pray, sir," asked Barnabas, "what is the present method?"

"With your permission, I will say a few words upon that subject." He seated himself upon his desk, his short, stumpy legs swinging in front of him. "We are meeting at a tremendous and awful banquet. It is, in our opinion, the end of the world."

(Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's amazing Sherlock Holmes story will be continued next week.)

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SCOUTS of SPACE



Deadly rays streaming from the two ships, pirate and scout fought their grim battle above the Asteroid field of the space pirates.

* SPACE PIRATES STRIKE

BY MOORE RAYMOND

*We are the Scouts of Space!
We roam among the stars!
And we're employed to scout the void
From Jupiter to Mars!
Our rocket ships are swift
Our thunder just the faintest roar!
In space a thrilling race—
Our blunder just the faintest trace!
We are the Scouts of Space!*

THREE ringing chimes filled the control room of the later-Planetary scout ship Silver Spar on the stars, showing vessel moving through space, thousands of lonely miles from the Earth.

The stages were Peter Thorpe, the youthful pilot of the rocket ship, and big Bill Reed, the engineer.

Their job was to patrol the space shipping lanes between the planets and to guard the passages and cargo ships from pirates, wandering asteroids, and other dangers of the void.

As Peter lay back on his hammock and napped at the controls of "The Ship of the Scouts of Space," he kept one eye on the control panel, for although the ship was now under robot steering, the pilot knew only too well that anything might happen in space.

Bill, the engineer, was more at ease as he belted the words of the song. The rocket motor, the electro-gravity motor, and the rest of the system under his control was functioning perfectly. At that moment he

did not care a darn for all space and everything in it.

"Here, again!" he roared. "All together!"

*We are the Scouts of Space!
We roam among the stars!
And we're —*

Bertram! Bertram!
The song ceased abruptly as the ship warning light flashed in the control room.
"The Chief!" exclaimed Peter. He leapt to his feet and rushed to the telephone.
He picked up the switch. The vast screen

The Police Patrol of Inter-Planetary Space go out after Pirates of the Void

By Moore Raymond

flashed and blurred, and then caught in sharp focus the strong, determined face of Chief Fred Clegg.

"Pilot Thorpe, of scout ship Silver Spar, reporting," said Peter in crisp, expert tones.

"The Chief did not waste words. "Meridian station reports that space ship Meridian was held up and robbed by pirates at 3 a.m.

(Earth time) to day. The Meridian was on her way from Mars to the Earth, and was 120,000 miles out from the Martian system. The pirates took her cargo of crystals and then robbed the passengers. Go on and meet the Meridian, get a description of the pirate ship from the Commodore—and then bring back the pirates!"

"Anyone else on the job?" asked Peter.
"All available scout ships have been notified. You are the nearest to the Meridian, and you'll catch her 24 hours ahead of the others. Don't wait for assistance, but go right on after those pirates!"

"We won't do any waiting!" replied Peter with a gasp.

"A word of warning," said the Chief. "Those pirates are lethal."

"Huh!" Peter set his jaw grimly.

"The Commodore of the Meridian will give you the details, as you'll know the type of crew you're dealing with. But you've got to get them, Thorpe, you've got to get them! The whole system of later-Planetary travel will be disrupted if men like that are allowed to go on robbing and killing. I'm depending on you."

"What's the position of the Meridian?" asked Peter, eager to be off.

"Alpha Centauri. 341.87. Bellatrix 511.39. Have you got that?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now go out and get those pirates!" As the Chief's face faded from the window, Peter turned to Bill, whose hand was already on the rocket motor switch.

Asteroid Hide-out of Space Pirates

"Give her the blast, Bill!"

The switch spouted blue as Bill jerked it across and Peter spun a gleaming wheel. The ship trembled and lurched as the dull blast of her rocket bang hit towards the blast.

For a few moments the friends were silent as the vast of acceleration gripped their bodies and squeezed the air from their lungs. Then, as the pressure eased off, they looked at each other and smiled.

"Presto, huh?" snorted Bill. "That's a new one on me."

"Me too," replied Peter. "Ease those asteroid motors a bit."

A red light suddenly glowed on the record log panel.

"Damn those asteroids!" snapped Peter. "Open all repeller screens!"

The red light gave warning of the approach of an asteroid, one of those erratic space wanderers, a fragment of some dead world speeding through the void.

But even a tiny asteroid was sufficient to wreck the biggest space ship, as all vessels were fitted with repeller screens which thrust off the heading danger with terrific blast.

The Silver Spear scurried a little from her course as the repeller rays tumbled aside the asteroid. The red glow faded from the warning panel, and Peter and Bill breathed freely once more. The young pilot brought the ship back to her original course.

Soon Peter began to send out television screens in search of the *Moonrock*. First at first, then stranger and stranger came the shell object, till at last Peter knew they were near enough to get an image on the view screen. He snipped over the switch.

"Hi Commander Stroud," said the face on the screen. "Our speed is 2,500, speed 16. Come alongside to port."

"O.K., Commander," replied Peter, and the wheel spun gently.

The little scout ship slid alongside the giant *Moonrock*, and the motion danger stopped, holding the ships together.

Peter and Bill slipped into the air lock of their own ship, then through into the communication lock, and finally into the air lock of the *Moonrock* herself.

Commander Stroud seemed relieved to see the two space scouts.

"We sighted a black ship with red heads about 2:30," he said. "So we changed distress lights, so no one alongside. They signaled that their oxygen apparatus had broken down, and we ran out our communication link."

"As soon as the black ship sped, about a dozen minutes were passed into the ship. They had no guns, and when my Chief Officer and two of the crew tried to stop them they were shot down and killed instantly."

"We were taken completely by surprise, and we could do nothing. The pirates must have known we were carrying reports because it was the first thing they asked. Then they robbed the passengers."

"Did they say or do anything to give you a clue as to who they were?" asked Peter.

"Not a thing. They simply took what they wanted, went back to their own ship, and all, and were away. I gave orders to follow them to see which way they were heading. But they were too fast for me. I kept them under telescopic and radioscopic observation for a while, but when they got near the Asteroid Belt they disappeared altogether."

"Did you notice just where they disappeared in the Asteroid Belt?"

"Yes, looked to me as if they were seeking for Stroud, but I don't think they'd get there."

"Why not?" asked Peter.

"The Commander shrugged his shoulders. The Asteroid Belt is uncharted, and only fools would try to land on any of the stars, let alone on Stroud, which means the end of the big war."

Peter smiled gently to himself. Then, turning to Bill, he said: "Time we were off—and make it speedy!"

"What are you going to do now?" asked Commander Stroud.

"I've got a crazy idea," was Peter's passing reply as he shook his head and stepped into the air lock.

The Silver Spear cut off and headed straight for the Asteroid Belt.

"Stroud?" exclaimed Peter as he sat the ship on her course. "What a grand spot for a pirate's hideout! A dead, deserted world—no one would ever expect them to be there."

"What are you mulling about?" snapped Bill. "You got a scientific idea like you, so what's all this about Stroud and the Asteroid Belt?"

"There's a whole ring of asteroids rolling along nearby in an orbit between Jupiter and Mars. They're all that's left of a planet that used to be there, but which somehow got bent up in a collision with another planet or something."

"And Stroud is one of these asteroids?"

"Correct, William. Go to the top of the class. Stroud is the biggest asteroid at present in this region. The other big ones are new on the opposite side of the belt. The pirate ship does its dirty work and makes for Stroud. Why?"

"Search me!" snorted Bill.

"Because no one would ever think of looking for pirates on Stroud. No one would ever think of looking for anybody on Stroud."

—on any other asteroid. They're just bits of dead rock floating about in space. Had someone these pirates found a way of landing on Stroud and making their headquarters there? Wouldn't it be the best place in the universe for a pirate's hide?"

"Well, we'll soon find that out," sighed Bill, "because we're nearly there."

Peter peered through the telescope and saw the ghosts of Stroud, still many hundreds of miles away, but near enough for observation.

"We've got to be mighty careful," he told Bill. "Besides the big asteroids, there are millions of little Strouds floating about —"

Before he had finished his warning the red light glowed, and they whipped open the repeller screens. Even before the first asteroid had passed a second loomed up, then a third and a fourth. At last everything was done, and the red light faded.

"Presto!" whistled Bill. "They must come in bunches like grapes in these parts."

Stroud was nearer now—a black, irregular mass which shone with a metallic gleam, where the sun's rays struck its jagged surface.

"We'll give it the once-over," remarked Peter as he swung the ship in an orbital course about the asteroid.

Nowhere on its surface could they see any sign of life. Peter aimed the Silver Spear and brought the view nearer.

"Isn't anything yet. It might —"

As! —

His exclamation brought Bill to the subsidiary apparatus of the telescope.

"See that mountain?" and Peter eagerly, indicating a jagged peak which thrust itself up from the midnight darkness of a gorge. "Look! Just at the foot of the mountain! Can you see anything?"

Around a shining rock platform they could see a tiny speck moving—not as an event source, but as a mass in a mass moving where gravity is small—a mass running its great legs. The speck disappeared in the shadow of the mountain.

"Spinal 62!" snapped Peter. "Check lower motors!"

The Silver Spear turned her nose down and dropped swiftly towards the mountain. Peter followed her out with the repeller screen, till she hovered above the wide rock platform.

There was a nature in the place of the black mountain, and Bill instinctively came closer to his seat as they moved at the end where they had seen the leaping man.

"Look!" snorted Peter.

Another two were heading towards the platform, in the shadow of the mountain.

Then, before the sun's



words could arise or speak, the base of the mountain was aglow. Out of the darkness flashed a violet flame, writhing and thrashing in its upward leap. It struck the Silver Spear a deadly blow, and the ship crew shuddered.

As if a terrible electric shock was passing through their bodies, Peter and Bill felt their muscles contract in agonizing cramps. They staggered about the control room, their faces white with pain, as the violet lightning uncoiled and glared along the length of the ship.

"Stand the way!" cried Peter, but the words died on his lips as another spasm of pain racked his body.

But Bill understood, and he dragged his body across to the panel, reaching out with cramped fingers for the control. The ship seemed to be falling towards the ocean as Bill, in a last desperate effort, thrust down the switch.

It took all Peter's will power to reach those extra few inches to hit control panel. The ship flung itself out of the silver floor, grazed the mountainside, and swung easily over the gleaming wastes at the horizon.

While one still reeling from those blows and feeling, it seemed to the two men that all the stars of space had shined about them. The Silver Spear sped steadily on.

Fighting the stupefying that was settling over him, Peter called to Bill to open the re-peller screen and to fix the retarding



With a blinding roar the little scout hurried through the doorway and streaked upwards towards the stars.

controls. He knew that if they did not lead soon, the ship might crash on to Stratos or over the eastern shore.

"Automatically, Bill went through the leading motions. Then, as he snatched over the last switch, he slipped on to the deck of the control room.

Through a red haze of pain, Peter saw the black wastes of Stratos come sliding up. There was a jarring, grinding impact of steel on rock, a reeling shock, and then the effect of concussion.

* THE BATTLE IN SPACE

"Bill! Where are you, Bill?"

Peter regained consciousness to find himself lying on the control room floor. He looked around in a dazed way, and called to Bill, but the engineer was not where Peter had seen him last.

The pilot started to climb to his feet, but he found himself flinging rapidly towards the roof, where he hit with a force that made him groan. Then he floated back to the floor again.

The reason for this strange behavior was very plain. In landing, the electro-gravity

apparatus of the Silver Spear had been damaged or had stopped for some reason, and the artificial gravity had gone out of the ship.

The asteroid on which they had landed was so small that its gravity was many times less than that of the Earth, and therefore any, the slightest force was necessary to overcome the gravitational pull of Stratos. Peter's abrupt movement had thrown him upward against the roof before he realized what had happened.

Clanking automatically to his feet and grasping at anything solid within reach, Peter searched the ship. Bill was nowhere to be found.

As Peter turned in Peter's dazed mind. He jerked open the space suit locker. Bill's space suit had gone.

"Had he somewhere and there," muttered Peter, peering through the glass windows at the black wastes of Stratos. "Next time he goes to—"

He looks all abruptly as he sees the outlines of a space ship in the horizon. It comes



black, with silver bands, and it was approaching fast. "The pirate ship!" exclaimed Peter, "I wonder."

He dashed to the control panel—and found it dead. He tried to start the rocket motors, but they were useless. The regular screen refused to function.

Now the pirate ship was overhead, and it came bearing down beside the Silver Spear. Peter had to think quickly. With all the ship's system useless, the best gun and the best way was the ray gun in his belt.

As his fingers closed on it, he wondered if there were not a better plan than to try to fight off the pirate single-handed, especially as his hands were still cramped with pain. His chance of escape were small—and Bill was missing. He decided to let the pirate make the first move.

Peering through the porthole, Peter saw the pirate ship ground smoothly out far from the Silver Spear. The air lock swung open, and half a dozen men in space suits came leaping towards the great ship. They carried ray guns in their hands.

Peter sprang back quickly from the porthole and ran his fingers over a shaded section of the control room wall. As he pressed a certain line of the shade, part of the wall swung back to disclose a secret hidden room which all Interplanetary scout ships were fitted. His quivering hand made and pulled the steel door shut. Hardly daring to breathe, he listened.

After a time he heard men's voices. The pirates had entered the ship and were making a search.

They did the job thoroughly, going through every section of the vessel, opening all lockers, and even removing the lining of the motor to see if anyone was concealed behind it.

Not until he heard the footsteps die away and the air lock door clang behind the pirates did Peter dare to creep from his cramped position. They obviously, he judged, open the door of the secret locker and shut into the control room.

Behind his aching limbs, he went once more to the porthole. He was glad to see that the pirate ship had disappeared. Then came the sound of steel banging on steel, and he saw two heavily armed and long-haired men around the door and stern of the Silver Spear.

Before he could realize what was happening, the great ship was rising off the ground and was being carried swiftly towards the black mountains. The pirate ship had descended like a hawk and was carrying off its prey.

It seemed to Peter that both ships would crash into the mountainside for they were making straight for the gleaming wall of rock. Again the pirate ship came to a halt and dropped towards the rock platform.

Suddenly a section of the mountain was swung outward. Peter's astonished eyes saw that it was a door to the side of the rock wall—a great shimmering disc of some translucent substance that opened to disclose a huge natural cavern. The pirate ship turned and backed quickly into the cavern, leaving the Silver Spear in its tracks of steel.

The scout ship settled quietly on the floor of the cavern, and the pirate ship dropped beside it. The great shimmering disc closed behind them.

Peter saw that the back, three sides of the cave were covered by the same transparency of this door, and the light that came through was soft and mellow, like the sunlight on Earth.

He switched the glasses from their day and over the floor of the cavern to some machinery in a corner. They waited there for a few minutes, and then removed their space suits. Peter decided that he had now been let into the cavern from some hidden source.

The great shimmering disc in the side of the cavern had passed through and out of sight.

Peter's first impulse was to follow down, and try to find out something about the disappearance of his men.

He checked himself with the thought that it might be better to see what was wrong with the ship. Then, when he found Bill, they would be able to make a getaway if necessary.

As he moved towards the engine room a white darkness descended and the cavern became black as midnight. The lighting overhead had swung its face away from the cave, and the black mountain and the cavern and all it contained had moved down into night.

Not daring to switch on a light or even to run his torch, Peter groped his way into the engine room, where he secured the infrared torch and spectacles.

The infrared torch gave out rays which could not be seen by human eyes, but which special spectacles were worn. Peter adjusted his spectacles and got to work on the motors with all speed.

He soon found the trouble. The shock of the forced landing had shifted off certain main connections, and to fix them was not a long job.

As far as Peter could judge, the ship was in order again. Yet he dared not feel it for fear of being discovered by the pirates, who could return at any time in the future.

Even as these thoughts ran through his mind he heard a soft, hissing noise that made him catch his breath.

Swiftly as a cat, he slipped into the control room and closed the infrared eyes on the air-lock door. The valve needle was swinging slowly over to "Full." Someone was entering the air-lock from the other side!

Grasping a splinter on his hand, Peter crouched down and watched. Quietly and

Battle of the Death Rays

curiously, the door was pushed open and a white disc peered into the room.

"Bill!"

At Peter's whispered exclamation the disc glowed brightly.

The disk reached out, his hand and dragged his pal onto the control room. "I cut you out with the infrared," he said.

"How you all right?"

"Fine! But we've got to move fast. They'll find out I've gone. Is the ship O.K.?"

"I find what I could, but I haven't been able to give her a lift. We'll have to risk it. Where have you been?"

"No time now. What are you doing?"

"We did not finish the antenna, for the screen was suddenly a mass of light, illumined by hundreds of electric balls which were strong about the walls.

"Look!"

Peter pointed down to where a score of men came streaming through a narrow doorway into the cavern.

"They've found out I've escaped!" snapped Bill. "Have you got your ray gun?"

"We haven't got a chance against them," replied Peter. "We'll have to make a run for it."

"How?"

"Through the door! Smash through the door!"

"Out to your controls!" shouted Peter. "And when I say so, give her the blast!"

Already some of the parties were halfway across the floor of the cavern.

Peter spun the steering wheel desperately. He took one look through the direction scope and then shouted: "Let her go!"

With a shrieking roar that filled the cavern with a loud blast, the Silver Spear leaped forward at the ground, striking down.

"Good!"

The crew of the ship struck the door fairly in the center. The two men were hurled off their feet with the shock of the impact as the door resisted for a fraction of a second and then burst outward with a ringing, shattering crash like the breaking of a million window-panes.

In the face of the thundering rockets, the fragments shattered for a second, and then went hurtling down into the darkness as the Silver Spear roared upward towards the stars.

Peter gripped dramatically at the keys and watched as he got the ship under control.

"Are you O.K.?" he asked to his mate.

"O.K." replied Bill, though not quite as cheerfully as usual.

A minute later, when they started to look back on Strubbe, they saw the pirate ship in pursuit. Up from the darkness on the face of the starboard side the clear sunlight of space, came a black dot, growing . . . growing . . . till it seemed close—a black vessel with sharp hands.

"That gun!" snapped Peter and Bill looked to the gun turrets.

The pirate ship came straight at the Silver Spear, trailing with tremendous speed of the ship's own ship.

"Watch!"

The Silver Spear lurched aside as the black ship sped by his gun turret. If it had not been the worst ship it would have crashed at his own position.

"You won't catch us that way!" roared Peter. "We're too fast for that gun!"

The enemy ship came back, then turned a course parallel to that of the Silver Spear.

"Let her go!" shouted Peter—and Bill fired the beam of infrared light leaped from the main ship and struck the pirate vessel.

A broad band of crimson light leaped from the main ship and struck the pirate vessel.

A broad band of crimson light leaped from the main ship and struck the pirate vessel.

ashtray. The black ship swerved and twisted, but she could not escape the deadly rays. The ball of the pirate ship began to glow a dull red.

Then, with a crack and a crackling, a violet flame burst out from the black vessel and struck the Silver Spear.

The shock rode to the leaders of the two vessels, contacting their firms with guns. For a moment Bill's eye went wide, and the enemy vessel slipped out of the heat rays.

Gritting his teeth, Bill swung the beam and once more played the crimson light on the black vessel.

The violet flame increased in intensity, and shock after shock thumped against the hulls of the two vessels as they slung in the controls. Bands of violet flame as they were seen as they watched the pirate ship turn white-hot in the path of the heat rays.

The pirate ship seemed about to escape from the rays, and for a moment the violet flame ceased. But, as Peter swung the beam again, the enemy vessel seemed to decide itself of choice into the next ship.

Guided so that he could hardly see, Bill still played the deadly rays on the enemy vessel, which now shone like some flaming serpent of fiery flame.

Neither ship could hold out much longer. The tortured vessel realized that, they knew one, that their only chance was to bring in all they or the enemy found death in the void.

Peter, now almost unconscious over the controls, was suddenly aware that Bill was swinging back from his gun. His breath broke between his teeth as he stamped on to the floor.

But the last gas had done its work. As Peter pressed out through a red haze at the first ship, he saw it suddenly swell like a blown balloon and then burst in a giant white flame as the violet flame exploded.

As the glowing fragments went hurtling into space, the violet flame ceased, and with it ended the torturing torture they had borne.

Hours later they returned to the black mountain of Strubbe, where they found only three men in great pain, who, relaxing the tide of the pirate ship, somewhere without any trouble.

They told the story of the hide-out on Strubbe, the construction of the power station and other machinery in the mountain cavern, the making of the door from materials found on the island, and the plans for making interplanetary vessels of their previous capture.

The boat was landed on the Silver Spear, the prisoners were taken aboard, and the route of space set off for home.

"Now let me ask you what happened to you," said Peter as they settled down on the Earthward way.

"When I came round after we'd landed," said Bill, "I tried to hang you round the neck, but you must have got a bigger shock than I did, because you wouldn't wince up at all."

"That I thought it would be a good idea to see how the ship was, so I put on my space suit and got out to see the damage."

"While I was having a look, some of the pirate blimps suddenly leaked up. I tried to hold, but they grabbed me and took me to their ship in the mountainside."

"They were going to bring the ship in, and they asked me if I knew any explosives in it. I told me, but I don't think they believed me."

"They shot me up in one of the rooms, but I got out after a bit of trouble. One of those blimps had a diamond jaw too."

He told up his strange knowledge and ground.

"I walked around for a bit and found myself in that cavern place, so I made for our ship. Then I found you and that's all there is to it."

"And now," said Peter, "we'll tell our story to the Chief."

He turned to the tolerance and began telling the Earth.



A Weekly up-to-the-minute News Feature on Matters Interplanetary

PLANETS

Contributed by P. E. CLEATOR, President of the British Interplanetary Society

A New Rocket Fuel?

FROM Austria comes the suggestion that instead of using oxygen as a fuel for rocket ships.

It is claimed that the new material would be more powerful. There does not seem to be any doubt about this, but to my mind there is a distinct possibility that it will prove too powerful!

Once, as the reader probably knows, it is an extra form of oxygen, which is generally supposed to exist in large quantities by the molecule. Largest comes in a deep red-brown colored liquid which boils at the extremely low temperature of minus 183 degrees centigrade.

The liquid is volatile, and is liable to explode without the slightest warning. Unless the difficulty can be overcome, it would seem that the new material will be more than dangerous for a rocket fuel.

Up to date, three have already been four deaths in Germany alone from fuel explosions.

A Fast Rocket Plane

SCIENCE (London, Austria) rocket experts, after Mr. Dr. Eugen Sanger, of Witten, believe that he is now engaged in developing a new type of rocket which should show the all-outgoing speed records.

Since the Germans flew the first rocket plane in 1929, they have been making experiments in this direction. In fact, every country of note, with the exception of England, seems to have realized the tremendous possibilities of rocket

propulsion for high altitude flying. The British Interplanetary Society approached the Air Ministry a short time ago, but without result.

Mr. Dr. Sanger has promised to let me have full details of his experiments in due course, and I hope to be able to describe them later.

Three New American Test Rockets

FROM New York come details and photographs of three new rockets, officially known as Experimental Rocket No. 3, 4 and 5.

It is hoped to shoot the first two this spring, and they have been designed to attain an altitude of over one mile. A special feature of Rocket No. 3 is that it is known as a thrust amplifier.

As the name implies, its purpose is to increase the thrust of the rocket. It is a tail-shaped device, into which the exhaust gases are discharged. A section is created, and questions of the surrounding air are driven through the superheater and discharged with the exhaust gases.

Twenty-Five Miles High Next

THE performance of three successive rockets will be carefully noted, and the information derived will be used in the construction of future models.

According to Mr. Lawrence Manning, President of the American Interplanetary Society, it is hoped that the next step will be the making of a large rocket which will be designed to attain a height of twenty-five miles.

HERE'S A SCOOP...

Sir A. Conan Doyle's
Great Story

As a writer of mystery and scientific fiction the Arthur Conan Doyle stood in a class by himself. His stories have been translated into almost every modern language. Few there can be who have not heard of Sherlock Holmes, the detective of fiction, whose adventures brought fame to the author of them.

Professor Challenger was another of Conan Doyle's great figures of fiction, and it is the Professor whose acquaintance makes with who is the amazing story, "The Poison Belt," the first instalment of which appears in this issue.

Scientists could possibly recognise the world passing through a poison belt of ether, but only Conan Doyle could have written such a vivid description of so great a calamity.

This Water Business

NOW that a shortage of water exists in so many parts of the country it is a good opportunity to say a few things about the field which is so essential to life of all kinds.

Aside from two terrible gases—vapour and hydro-sulphuric water is interesting in various ways.

Usually, when a gas is subjected to a lower temperature and greater pressure it becomes a liquid and finally a solid, shrinking greatly as it does so. Water as a liquid or being frozen becomes solid for which, contrary to the general rule, is less dense—that is, lighter both for bulk than the water from which it was made. Thus ice floats on water, keeping the lower strata of lakes and rivers free for fish to swim in.

Water from various sources contains different percentages of solid matter which, in the case of sea water, render the liquid unfit for drinking.

Sea water contains the least foreign matter and is, therefore, "soft" and makes a better supply.

Rivers and lakes follow in order of increasing solid matter, and are used as reservoirs for the supply of water to the different parts of the country.

The water in these is destined to obtain depth, and is led through pipes to beds of cinders and sand to remove certain elements of an unwanted nature. From there it is distributed through further pipes to the houses depending on that particular supply.

What could we do if the "no-water" crisis became really acute? Can we make water?

Yes! But the process of electrolysis a mixture of oxygen and hydrogen by passing electric sparks through them is expensive, and produces so little at a time as to be entirely useless for practical purposes.

There is one way, however, that may be of use, and that is by the distillation of fresh water from sea water.

This is readily brought about by heating large quantities of the salt water to boiling in vessels and leading off the steam through cooled pipes. The steam condenses and pure water is collected at the pipe end.

This method is what might be termed unpractical because, while it has been done to supply towns in the East with water during famine, it would take a great deal of apparatus



and a large staff of workers to organise and put into operation any such scheme in England.

But if this summer lives up to the expectations of a few past English summers, we won't have very much to worry about!

Air Midshipmen Now

EVERY day brings more new examples of how we are becoming "air-minded."

The most recent one is that of the famous Naval Training College. If M.C. Brown, who has for twenty years been an officer in the Merchant Service and the Royal Navy, and is now seeking powers to become the leading Civil Aviation College in Britain.

The Training College will take Air Cadets who will do a minimum course of two years on board the Worcester.

On reaching the age of 18 the Cadets will qualify for the Worcester Air Certificate—and just like their sailing companions who then go on as apprentices they will go on as apprentices to the first Air Service Training, Ltd., at Southampton.

It is expected that this scheme will go through.

Nature's Pranks

TWO recently published accounts of queer tricks Nature can play bring home to us some idea of the mighty forces she has available.

In the first case a flash of lightning literally "toured" a cottage. The lightning struck a chimney, leapt to a bedroom in which two boys were sleeping, followed the iron frame underneath and set fire to the bedclothes. Continuing the tour, the flash descended a leg of the bedstead to the room below, making a hole in the floor into which a finger could be inserted.

On reaching a ladder the lightning set another hole in a wall, and only two inches as a child was faced together.

In the kitchen the flash tore a piece of tape on a stick to a shingle and it eventually concluded its tour by passing out through the open door of the cottage.

Not so alarming, but probably more dangerous, is the account of how a tree put into a state of water-spout in the Atlantic.

There were so many reports—some of them had a mile across the basin—that the ship had to make in all directions to avoid them, and she eventually docked five hours late.

A Weekly Review mainly about Ourselves and of the Wonders of the World of To-day and To-morrow



An All-Electric Britain?

BRITAIN is rapidly becoming an all-electric country!

That is the conclusion to be drawn from the Annual Report of the Central Electricity Board, which directs Britain's great electricity advances.

Within the last four years Britain's electricity output has been increased by nearly thirty per cent., while the rest of the world shows a rise over the same period of under five per cent.

Britain's electricity output in 1933 exceeded that of the previous year by over ten per cent.

Electrification is progressing in every direction.

As the report points out, while in 1927 only twenty-three per cent of the population in Britain were taking supplies of electricity, last year some nine per cent were connected to the grid.

If this rate of increase can be maintained, it will not be long before an almost all-electric Britain will be an accomplished fact.

The Television "Battle"

WE are witnessing the opening stages of a quiet struggle between a number of great firms to supply Britain with television broadcasts.

There are at least three distinct types of transmission now rapidly being brought before the public—and only one of them can survive steadily increasing such demands a different type of receiver. But when one of the systems proves itself superior to the others then owners of other types of receivers will find their equipment useless.

Mr J. L. Baird is hard at work on one of the systems, broadcasting from one of the towers of the Crystal Palace in London. The firm has brought television to such a stage that an air line linking London has received television programmes and can, from its broadcasting station on the ground below.

Engineers of the rival organisations are also experimenting feverishly to keep up in the great television broadcast race.

One firm will build an extensive for making out television programmes. If the consent of Parliament can be obtained, each system will send out a different programme on wavelengths of about six metres, and so the range of a system will be 100 miles about the whole of Britain would be covered by this system.



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Saltney looked on what had once been the Strand. Buildings rose to sickening heights and dwindled away in lines of perspective to the strip of light which was the sky.

Metal

What will be the outcome of this amazing age of machines? Already, as reported on page 370, Britain is creating a machine that can think—a metal genius that will be able to work out the most intricate mathematical problems. It is not a very far cry to the machine that will rule the destiny of nations, a Metal Dictator, such as our author portrays in this powerful story of tomorrow.

By L. B. Silvester

played, but between buildings everyone ran with wing attachments operated by a small box provided electric power strapped on the back. Patrons had read at the public Phonos again and again about such things as football, cricket, tennis, walking, running; and walking was the only one of them he could practice in the midst of this featureless city of machines.

It was sparkling—glorious springtime—but where was that green feeling associated with lambs and crocuses, budding plants, singing birds, leafy green grass, and sweet scents? Where was the light and pleasure of the month of the year? With the cultivation and sowing by machinery of every available square inch of land had died the old country life of farms and homes. No longer could the tired city workers seek the cool refreshment of green fields and brotherhood, mountain sides, and in any case there was no room for becoming tired.

"How I wish something would happen!" and Saltney frowned and gazed heavily in the windowless walls on either side. His hands slipped back to his hollow pockets.

He laughed. The laugh was throaty and hoarse. "Go on, laugh!" he yelled, unconsciously being control of himself, so completely miserable did he feel.

"Steady on, son!" said a quiet voice from just behind him, and a hand was laid on his shoulder.

In surprise the young fellow swung rapidly round, to confront an old man, whose face and head were creased with worry, lines, and whose brown, weathered face was wreathed in a warm smile.

"It does get you!" said the stranger simply.

"Do you mean you really understand?" gasped Saltney, so used to the answer of his fellows.

The brown-faced man smiled again.

"Well, I ought to, you know. I spent six years in the midst of so much action and adventure that even at my age I sometimes feel restless and fit to run."

There was a moment's silence then Saltney said impulsively: "If you're not going anywhere in particular, perhaps you would come home with me and tell me some of your experiences?"

"I was just out for a little stroll—it's then, only because I put," was the reply. "Stay, you've come home with me, instead?"

Thankfully the young man agreed, and together they entered a tiny metal door in the side of a giant building some four hundred yards away. A lightning journey up twenty floors and the lift left no doubt to move smoothly along a wide, softly lit corridor. Without the slightest jolt the "lift" stopped outside the door of the old man's apartment. The two men stepped out and

* MACHINERY GONE MAD

A PALE, sickly sunlight shone half-heartedly on to the towering spires of New London. Saltney grey stone, hewed in jagged metal, showed white against a tawny sky. Now it would rain.

Not a soul was to be seen on the narrow terraces giving the massive mystery of the metropolis, not did the sound of a single flying foot hear in the morning air. In this year of grace, 1936, life had become such an easy affair that it was entirely unnecessary to rise from one's couch until the day was well past the zenith. Work, such as had been known in the unsophisticated part of the country, had ceased to exist. Now-days people never had occasion to use their hands save to perform small operations like eating or drinking, washing—necessity in measure—did everything.

Most people found such a state of affairs quite an ideal mode of existence, but there were a few who still protested at public meetings against the utter childlike of it all.

Such a one was back-bird Saltney. With unaltered force he would point to the metal furniture of the nation of the world. To

his eyes, Radiation had become Direction. The clock which had been slowly winding itself up over centuries was rapidly winding down.

One particular morning Saltney stood to what had once been the Strand. He looked upwards at the sickening height of the buildings. It was like looking through a tunnel—like of perspective dwindled away into the strip of light which was the sky.

With a sigh he began to walk slowly along the narrow wall of black glass. Even so the youth of 1925 had sighed for the days of Meville Ringbald, when armored knights stride and black chargers tilted light-heartedly at the tournaments, so did this young man view the heady shadows and the steady blue eyes high for those not so far distant days when bustling bustling shopping crowds had thronged the air upon which he was now walking, men, women and children always on the move—striving to see the wares displayed as articles in the shop windows, pushing their way to the further side at the end between streams of many things, everything, so intensely alive.

On these solitary walls of his he never met anybody, who would trouble to walk when flying was the usual means of transport. For long distances rocket planes were em-

DICTATOR

pulling open the door, went inside, leaving the light to flicker in the shaft, alone.

Saltney looked about him and inwardly marvelled. He knew what a "den" looked like from his books, but this was the first time he had ever seen a real one. They said, chairs stood on a heavy piled carpet. A big, carved oak table, with a disaster and a quirk of square on it, stood in the centre of the room. On the walls were pictures, old-fashioned guns and rifles, swords, spears, bows and arrows, even lances bent upon a battered dead steed in the corner, and last, but not least, a real coal fire burned in the wide, open fireplace.

Time last named caused Saltney to gape in sheer amazement. The old man chuckled slightly.

"Sit down. Make yourself at home," he invited, taking off his outer garments. "I am so you looking at my fire. I can tell you I've had quite a lot of trouble with the public health people over it. They wanted to make out that the smoke was bad for the city's health. Anyway, they've let us keep it. I've a drawer of jobs getting coal, though, but I've a friend who has put interest in the National Coal Producers Association, and he ships me a ton of the good old black diamonds every now and again. And, by the way, my uncle's Western-Jeff mine, Professor Harold Western."

Saltney introduced himself, and for nearly two hours listened to the old man's colorful rattle. At the young fellow was leaving, the professor said earnestly:

"Watch my words, son. Things can't go on like this for ever; one of these days something's going to blow up!"

* THE MENACE OF THE MIND

AFTER this first meeting, Saltney became a regular comrade to the scientist's rooms.

One evening, a visitor and his young friend were sitting quietly in front of the fire, smoking but not talking, when the radio received a message to him urgently.

"Switch it on, Rod," said Western; "it's a Government message."

Saltney rose to his feet and switched over the controls. A deep voice filled the room.

"National Safety Department calling all citizens. This is Manderville of the National Safety Department calling all citizens. All listen! All listen! For over ten years the united nations of Siberia, with China and Japan have been governed by the Mechanized Mind. During this time it has been constantly feared that an attempt might be made to inaugurate a revolution in this country in favour of a similar mode of state control. It would appear that our work here has been done, well founded. An emissary from the Mind has been with a proposal to Government Headquarters. Democracy demands that it be put to the nation. All people over twenty are to record their vote within forty-eight hours. Stand ready for the proposition."

There was a slight pause, then—

"I, the Mind, the great brain who controls the destinies of nations, speak to you, the British people, through the mouth of my emissary. It is perfectly evident that to have an even group of men could rule your country and guide the course of your lives with the same ruthless efficiency which I could display were I to decide to take over your government. This is not a point for argument, no one could possibly doubt my ability, but here is my magnanimous suggestion. I am willing to remain control of your affairs. I am talented in the English. Why, I don't know. I have asked the offi-

cials of your present ruling system to arrange for formal voting on the subject. I say formal as there can be no doubt as to the success of my future subjects. However, in the very remote event of a refusal of my offer, I would say now as a warning, that I am quite determined to insist on you with my weapons even if I were forced to use violence."

"That is the message from the Mind," went on Manderville. "Voting will take place at Government Headquarters."

As the professor became dead again, Saltney looked across at his other companion.

"Just what is this Mind, Rod?"

The Mind pulled its voice at his out-pouring old pipe for a moment or so, then looking straight into Saltney's eyes, he said quietly:

"The Mind is the last, half-bred outcome of science gone wrong. It is the inevitable flesh to this age of too much machinery. There is no place for real humans in the work of the phantoms of the Mind except its soul of control, none there will be no place for them even in the thought of the planet. If you would like a brief description of this Mind and the circumstances under which it came to be built, I think I am in a position to give it. You see I was in the East at the time."

Early young Saltney seemed the old man to talk about the Mind—here at least was something which smacked of adventure.

Curtainly the professor asked the fire and waited the red coals glow. With a gentle knock he knocked out the ash from his pipe, and had it reversed on the broad arm of his easy chair. Then, nothing back more completely, he began to talk.

"From the chair we've had together lately, Rod, my boy, you know that I was never one to stay quietly at home when there was a chance of some excitement elsewhere. Granted I was trained at a big university as a scientist, and for some short time was actually on the faculty as a professor of chemistry, but this didn't last. By diligent study I widened my curriculum with a course in constructional engineering, and was soon, though I say this with all modesty, sought after by several Eastern powers who wished to utilize my acquired knowledge in the development of their territories."

"For years I wandered about, from China to Yank-shan, from there to Peking. I became the friend and adviser of many a monarch, and the right-hand man of many a petty monarch. I surveyed land, built roads, tunnels, bridges. My railways ran from frozen tundras to burning tropical swamps. But always I searched. No door seemed closed to me as I moved from place to place. My adventures never resulted in the meeting and fighting which daily fell to my lot."

"Then, in 1940, came a conflict in the East which changed the face of many things. Quite often in the past there had been trouble between China and Japan. After the Great



As the halloo came forth their deadly had of white-hot metal the Mind Machines spun round and toppled to the ground.

War of 1904, during which the Japs had a chance to catch up with the other civilized nations of the world, things seemed to be exceedingly steady between these two eastern nations. China always got the worst of any passage of arms, and slowly Japan was getting a hold on the mainland.

"In 1904 Japan forced the new Empire of Manchuria, setting up as a puppet Emperor the ex-boy Emperor of China. This had the effect of forcing the hand of the Soviet Government of Russia. Ever since they had been beaten by the Japs in the Russo-Japanese War the Russians had been very wary in their dealing with the little yellow race. In this fashion of a weakened Empire controlled entirely by the Japs they saw a threat to their own security, so accordingly they prepared for action. Thus, when the fatal war came in which China for a change declined war on Japan, the Russians threw in their weight with the Japs."

"Somewhere, 1904, saw the glories of Southern Siberia and the valleys of the Yellow He and the Yangtze King heavily bathed in blood. The Western world watched in horror, but had the good sense not to interfere, although many an adventurous Englishman free-lanced, as it were, among the combatants.

"As a friend of all parties you can realize the delivery of my position in the very midst of the confusion as I was. First would come a Japanese proposal. Would I care to attack again in their engineering action. Power and money would be mine when they had crushed the enemy, if I would only give up assistance to them. Then would come repeated entreaties from the Chinese, the weak and the coward long anxious to their offer to me by the opposition.

"For some time I managed to keep entirely out of the blood-soaked affair, but when I realized the cold, hellish way in which the Japs were carrying on their campaign, men, women and children alike falling before their reckless armies, I determined to do what little I could for the Sino-Russia cause. With a few good Greek letters, war began gradually drifting on.

"Accordingly I was attached to a regiment of Sappers at an airport in Siberia. From here I helped to plan attacks, and also tried to work out with my job, and also turned my scientific training to account on behalf of the living Chinese and Russians.

"In company with a Russian physicist, Professor Dobson, I was concerned with death ray apparatus and ultra short wireless waves. Together we developed a battery, but infamously light weapons, which could send a ray of white heat of a compound which became white hot as they scorched through the air. This particular little invention proved of remarkable assistance later on in the campaign.

"As the months dragged by the Japs began to fall back a little, and there was great rejoicing among our troops at what looked like a turn of the tide. Certain it was that when, in company with twelve other 'plains, I flew over the nearest Japanese base, I found no trace of the enemy. The day before they had been shelling and bombing our Headquarters, the terrible new poison gas, and now they had disappeared, taking all their weapons and equipment with them.

"For some time we flew about over the camp, not knowing whether there was some trap somewhere, but our acoustical and optical instruments did not fit, for when at last we did land and cautiously approached the Japanese buildings, we found that the whole really had been a deception, though wholly unaccountable, creature.

"Come, comrade," said my friend Petruska, who had flown in my 'plane, "let us organize a search. It is possible that some reason for the Japanese flight may be brought to light. Though we have been brought there had during the last few weeks it is unlikely that they have gone just because of lack."

"In these words Petruska voiced my own thoughts. There was more in it than met the eye. It was up to us to solve the riddle.

"With weapons under I called for the expedition leader, a whimsical little Chinese with an accent and hands of steel.

"Look here, Saye," I said, "you'd better take all the 'planes back to the base, but be in readiness for any message from Dobson or myself; we are staying on to make a few investigations. See."

"I see," I go," was Saye's brief reply. "Let us determine in what had been the commandant's private study, Petruska and I prepared to search the entire camp. If you ask me what was in our minds, I must say 'I don't know.' Or if we had asked each other at the time what we expected to find, we would perhaps have provided complete guesses. The fact is we couldn't even begin to think of possibilities; the whole thing was so strange. What will probably appear to you is this: That in the last of our seeing the rest of the 'planes and then back to HQ and reasoning along. However, what we thought, or didn't think, is really of no consequence. What matters is what happened.

"Well, here are the events as they turned up. Following our decision to search the

fully the whole of the enemy base, Petruska and myself started with the 'bangers. We were lucky in a way, for the day to the situation lay within these walls, while laid up of light wind.

"Together we pushed open the door of the first 'banger and peeped inside. A strong smell of petrol came to our nostrils, but mingled with it a some indefinable way was the odour of damp earth.

"It was pitch dark inside the great metal house as we stepped cautiously inside.

"The lights, comrade," said Petruska softly, "though fearful at an overexposure." "Yes, where are the lights?" I said. "It would have been much better if we each of us had had the forethought to bring a torch. Anyway, come on; the switches must be somewhere about."

"I suppose I should have mentioned that the door through which we had just come was a fly spring set in the great sliding door at the open end, and had closed behind us immediately. I had seen a glow. Flashes spread out, I felt along the walls. With a suddenness was to build a piece, I thought it was to place light switches as near the door as possible.

"Then came a third and a disturbing sound. A voice came to my startled ears. It was Petruska, and he seemed to be speaking from behind the ground.

"Quickly, Petruska!" he called in muffled tones. "I am slipping. I can't hold on much longer!"

"With a sigh, I relented my hand closed over the switch. I swept them all up at once, and flooded the 'banger with a brilliant white light.

"For a moment I stared; the sudden light was strong in my eyes, which only a second before I had kept shut. I took a look at someone's themselves in the wall with a grotesque blackness. That I saw. I saw a light which both startled and amazed me. The case level floor of the 'banger was riddled with holes about one foot across, and by the side of each was fired a heap of heavily excited earth and rock.

"For a second I stood motionless; then Petruska's voice came to my ears. From the sound it was obvious that he had slipped over one of the earth piles and slipped down into the hole nearest the door.

"I dropped on to my face and looked over the edge. The great air lights shone down into the apparently bottomless depths. Petruska was seen fifteen feet down, and by some invisible force, as I supposed, had managed to prevent himself from falling further. I could see that his arms and legs were spread wide, gripping the wall with all the side of the hole, thus keeping him wedged precariously against the walls of the chamber.

"Hold on just a little longer, old man," I called. "I'll have you out in a jiffy." "Something happened to me just as I dashed from the 'banger and leaped about for a piece of rope. I was lucky, or rather Petruska was, for I found a piece attached immediately.

"It was the work of a few seconds to drop the rope in my hand, and with his skillful climbing, aided by every corner of strength I could muster, he was soon standing on his feet, by my side.

"Mary, thank," he said briefly, and shook my hand.

"What do these holes mean?" I asked. "Petruska shook his head slowly. They seem to go straight down; down into the earth."

"Together we explored the holes and noticed that each hole was exactly the same size, and that although many were through soft soil and rock like the one into which my friend had fallen, quite a few passed solid rock. Whatever was responsible for the holes had certainly been driven by enormous power.

"You notice that we instantly assumed that the holes had been made mechanically, but that was only natural, since this was the

PROFESSOR ROBOT

The Machine that "Thinks"!

AN amazing creation of machinery which will be able literally to "think" and solve problems of physics and engineering too profound for the human mind to grasp is taking shape at the Metropolitan Vickers works at Trafford Park, Manchester.

It is being constructed under the guidance of Professor R. R. Hartree, of Manchester University, from plans supplied by the Institute of Aeronautics, Royal Air Force, where the first robot of this kind was built.

The mechanical genius, which has already been dubbed "Professor Robot," is a weird structure consisting merely of bang shafts and interlocking wheels linked up in series, while the "brain" or "integrator," as it is termed, is mounted in a series of spiral wheels which roll over the surface of revolving discs. Only one human assistant is required by Professor Robot, and once all the problems he will be able to solve are—

The structure of the atom.

The structure and properties of the atom.

Questions concerning electric motion.

The reaction of a high-tension electric power has when struck by lightning.

It will be able to solve in ten to fifteen minutes problems which would take even the greatest human experts something like six hours to work out.

Since the idea of the operation of the mechanical mind is grasped by the following—

The human assistant draws a graph in the face of a parallel curve giving the details of the problem, and this is fed into the machine.

A pointer—which might almost be termed the "eye" of the machine—picks up the curve, and all the assistant has to do is to keep this pointer following the line of the curve.

An electric motor is brought in, and then Professor Robot begins to think it out. From the wheel end of the machine the answer comes out in the form of another curve or a printed figure—whatever is required.

Only one machine of this kind is at present in existence—in America. The second is being constructed at Manchester and a third in Oslo, Norway.

It would not be a very good step to "The Metal Detector"—the amazing mechanical genius portrayed in the story on this page.

The Birth of the Mechanical Genius

house of a bazaar, and no one in his right mind would have thought of building an enormous "grange" in such a place if the land had always existed.

"As an engineer, moreover, what do you think of these lakes?" asked Peiramus.

"—As an engineer," I replied, "I don't know what in the world to think. It would take a considerable machine to strengthen a job like this; there are too holes, and each appears to be of different depth, and besides, wherever or whatever undertook to make them must have had some motive in doing so."

"You are right," said Peiramus gravely. "But what is that motive? I have a feeling that something sinister is afoot."

"I washed my agreement, but although I would hardly have used the same phraseology, I certainly felt that something was in the wind."

"We searched farther, but nothing else of interest was forthcoming, so we flew back to the house."

"When I stopped working for a moment and walked—," that, old man, I started out to give you a brief description of how the Mind came to be formed and what it really is, instead I've been jangling away about my own little adventures, which, although they do lead up to the Mind, are certainly being very long-winded about it."

"Long-winded my grandfather," laughed Arthur. "Call it brief if you want, but for Peiramus's sake go on. Tell me everything. Tell me what Peiramus led far broader, or what colored rocks the Emperor of Rome wore, but please go on!"

* THE MIND STRIKES

"THE MIND lives after our discovery of the deserted house," says Peiramus, and then goes into his chair and leisurely smokes his pipe. "Several miles of country, we are told, in which our own reconnaissance found no living soul."

"The house was a beautiful great old house, but we saw it all from the air. Accompanied by a dull boom which seemed to indicate the existence, the surface of the land, which at first we saw in progress, and then reflection of some of rock were flying into the air as though by a mighty hand."

"It was hours before the dust clouds had cleared away, and we were able to land and take stock of the extent of damage done."

"To begin with, it was extremely difficult to find any stretch of land sufficiently level to make any sort of landing at all. In fact, we finally managed to bring the plane down. The destruction was terrific, unmeasurable. Five miles around us a building, not a tree was left standing. (Of the house there was not the slightest sign, so completely had the devastating work been done. As for the men who had been stationed there, not only had every one of them been instantaneously killed, but their poor, shattered bodies had been flung as an offering of war to the four winds.)"

"At Peiramus and I looked at each other, there was no doubt, it was made as to the origin of the catastrophe explosion. It is scarcely we know that this explosion takes in the earth were no more strange any connection with that awful catastrophe. Where our reasoning were so, finally, I don't know."

"It may be as well at this point if I were to explain certain things which neither Peiramus nor myself knew till later on."

"It will need to shorten things a bit, and bring us on to the all-important subject of the Mind itself."

"Intimate, and definitely poised machines which had the power of working out any algorithm, or chemical equation were known, in fact were well known in scientific circles, as far back as 1832. Integrate they were usually termed. The machine to which we were set up on the key-board of the in-

strument, and once the machine was put into operation it would very rapidly solve the most difficult and obscure problem of calculus, and send a whirling of tiny wheels and electromagnetically controlled levers, type the answer on a strip of paper fed from a carriage roll."

"They were a teleprinter, which recorded, by means of a selenium recording eye its observations on a magnetic tape."

"From these beginnings, four Japanese scientists, working in close collaboration, had developed a machine which could demonstrate on an index board, in certain code numbers previously determined, thought associations produced by shape, size or color. Thus for a sound object one number would appear, but for a figure which an entirely different number would be shown. This simple principle was altered further and sound perception, feeling, and even taste were capable of exact mathematical demonstration by the machine in a mechanical way the apparatus would then."

"Working feverishly and using all the Japanese skill they could command, these Japs produced nothing more nor less than a great mechanical mind; a gigantic mind."

S.O.S. from SATURN

Two space scientists, building a comet ship in Britain, pick up a short wave radio which they believe to be an S.O.S. from Saturn. They set out for the planet, and meet with adventures that shatter human imagination. How they save the inhabitants of Saturn is told in a thrilling manner in this S.O.S. from Saturn, and continuing story next week.

ALSO

The POISON BELT

The second installment of the story of space exploration, featuring adventures of Professor Challenger and his assistant, begins when the tale of which comes crashing over all the earth.

By Sir Arthur CONAN DOYLE
AND
Invaders From TIME

A famous young scientist, experimenting on the mysterious and little-known power of time, brings his work back from the future—30,000 years in the past. He's shocked! Shocked! Shocked!

In SCOOPS NEXT WEEK

scrying all the sciences it is possible for the human hand to be aware of, looked safely away in its mass of cells, coils, wheels, and joints."

"Never satisfied, for they were working for a definite purpose, the Japs scientists shaved away at their creation night and day, scarcely stopping to eat or rest. Further mechanism were constructed with complete confidence of the different wires and circuits set out on several tracks of flexible material; these when completed were fitted as to the main machine, and represented what we would term the "lungs of knowledge" of the human hand."

"At this stage in its development the Mind was introduced secretly to the Japanese Government as a means to an end. It found favor in the eyes of the powers that be, and again money and power were forthcoming to aid in its construction."

"From the last sciences of the earth, knowledge is so added and added to the Mind's chemical vocabulary. You or I might read a thing and forget, the Mind never forgets anything which is once recorded on its rolls. Its recording power became greater than its creation, and the time came when the Mind was ready to advance the construction; there was nothing left for things to tell it."

"The news of the Mind, collected by the government in secret, had placed thousands of men and women in a thousand places throughout Japan. Finally the numbers of the eyes and ears of the Mind grew and finally a thing happened from now and of the country to the other that the Mind was not immediately seen and heard?"

"Both was the wisdom of this great mechanical trend, that sensitive document of every kind were left to it by high and low alike. Thus had come the day when the enormous power of the Mind with its attendant army of servants, assistants and machines, had edged that of the government and even the Emperor. Everything they did now was the work of a command from the Mind."

"There were, of course, many Japanese officials who could gladly have destroyed this amazing metal "creature" which had become the misgiving of the nation's life, but any attempt, no matter how ingenious, came to naught."

"To begin with, the Mind was housed in a huge metal vault built ground where the most powerful explosion dropped from a plane could never reach it. Secondly, a



A world without
in a day from
Saturn

forty feet thick "barrier" of death rays surrounded the site in every direction; the Mind lay literally in a sphere of destruction. The only people who could pass through the deadly area were the periodic attendants, who were special acts. Incidentally, any late news on the part of one of these men and he would be instantly disintegrated by a beam of cosmic force which was focused on him from the time he entered until the time he left."

"Then came the war, China, you will remember, started operations first. The existence of the Mind was known to other nations than the Japanese, but no one realized for some time just how powerful it really was. In the China and Russia, the head of the army was still the Emperor of Japan. As for myself, that tale I had heard about this creation of metal only seemed me, but, with the information you now possess you will have guessed that that terrible explosion which wiped out so many of our men was engineered by the Mind."

"However, after that rather lengthy digression, let me return to where I was before and try to pick up the threads of the story."

"Now that the base was utterly destroyed, the first job that lay before Peiramus and

myself was to attack numbers to show other men. Bangkok or China, it mattered little to me. I killed as a man of the wandering country and together we passed over it. After a brief reference to my note book for actual figures we decided to make for Drakema, a small town some eighteen miles away.

"You wonder after our diversion we were talking to the Russian commandant there. He had heard the explosion and was very much surprised when we told him the extent of the damage."

"Several days passed, and the whole time we were in constant fear of a similar explosion in our own town. But everything went on quietly and unobtrusively. Fighting on this front seemed to have finished. Not a Japanese appeared to be within miles. This left little time."

One morning, about a week after arriving at Drakema, I was standing on the corner of the main street, idly watching the animated scene in Drakema Square. It was market day, and now that the messenger from the Japs had apparently ended, the country folk from outlying villages and towns had trodden in to and dumped their wares on the main market square in the middle street.

"The sun shone brilliantly as in the early morning, and seemed many a headed visitor to snap his winking eye, and pour a shower from his violent dripping."

"One grotesque old lady accused my attention. Dressed in vivid orange and red livery, she was determined to have me spend some of her money. I had been from a summer-long vendor, but she wanted to pay her own price for it. London and London gave her nothing, she called on all the wares to witness the misbehavior of the still larger, but this worthy gentleman, while still preserving an only smile, remained adamant."

"Still laughing, I was about to turn away, when the orange and red old lady gave vent to a scolding of such nature."

"'Hah! Hah!' she cried, 'the ground is shaking.' We are to be engulfed by an earth quake."

"Now, enough, slight brushings were apparent beneath my very feet. The stalls towards the middle of the square began to rock unceasingly, and a moment later the spinning mass of a strange machine thrust itself suddenly through the crowded market. Such was the terrific force behind the newly revolving screen, that it killed up a man and his wife, but who was unfortunate enough to be standing on the spot where it emerged from the ground. The merchant gave no heed to this, then he was engaged to piece and bang aside like meat from a sausage machine."

"Passionately people ran in every direction, taking on the whole, the way, any thing to save them. For my own part I stood rooted to the spot, with my eyes fixed on the weird creation which my attention only fully made aware."

"This, of course, was the engine which had tossed the Japs we had seen in the harbor. The horrid apparition appeared capable of entering the very Chinese temples. Just as I was wondering what sort of a war the machine carried, the whole of one side dropped open, and with a mechanical whirring, another machine stepped out of the interior of the first."

"Yes, 'stepped' is the right word. It is the only word which correctly describes the method of locomotion of this weird apparition. It was raised and set, along feet, feet, thick, and eight feet wide. As it moved out into the market place it finally stretched eight feet, flexible, metal legs, each with a rubber disc for motion purposes on the end. It moved forward with a queer, gliding movement, right in my direction."

"With a gap of half I dashed to run. A high and deep voice called out."

"'Stop! Stop, or I shall fire on you.' It was the metal creature speaking."

"Not wishing to get a volley in the back

I perforce complied with its demand. It came to within ten feet of me and made again. I noted that the sound came from a small hole which opened in its glittering metal side."

"'Listen,' it said. 'Everyone has fled from here at the sound of my approach. This is ridiculous. However, as you are available, I will give the Mind's message to you, and will wait while you pass it on to these silly lawless.' I am one of the Mind's henchmen. I have been endowed with certain powers on behalf of the great one."

"It is the express wish of the Mind that the present order be restored. To that end it has sent out hundreds of machinery, such as myself to all the war zones. You will have heard of the great explosion which recently destroyed an expedition; how near here I was responsible. I am also armed with various types of guns, and can send a highly dangerous poison gas, so that you can readily appreciate the other policy of expedition."

"I was silent for a moment. A ray of light from your brain which I have just felt, that you are fully intelligent. I want you, therefore, to tell the world to remain passive, and in a few days, when the organization of the Mind is completed, we will take over the entire control of this country just as we have done in Japan."

"I listened dumbfounded to this glibly spouted speech, then at last I found my tongue."

"You think that China, Russia and Japan will be ruled under the leadership of this Mind you talk about?" I asked.

"Quite correct," grinned out the machine. "Local controls will be needed until the advent of the Mind have made the necessary and necessary systems in Russia and China as complete as those of the Japanese Islands."

"And you want me to deliver this personal to the people of Drakema?" I asked.

"Again, quite correct," was the parting answer. "In eastern Asia this time it is necessary that you should speak. You should remember in addition that a little more borrowing on my part, and I can show this town and its western day light."

"The thing stalked slowly back to the home machine and faded itself away. The side closed up again, and the whole apparatus began to move forward on tiny rollers which appeared miraculously on the underside. With lightning speed I withdrew to take up a position some twenty feet from where it had first appeared. A low hum came to my ears, and what must have been a second series began to rotate underneath."

"Crushed alone and earth were seen flying up the sides of the machine, and it began to sink into the earth. However, in a few seconds the wheel stopped, and the metal hull was raised and submerged."

"Remembering the man's threat, I hurried back to the fortress-like machine which Petruska and I had been trying. Quickly I told my friend what had happened and together we saw the mayor of the town, Chen, were not hurrying through the streets (Petra was not in the town at last week's Drakema), and the whole population was removed into Drakema Square, though everyone gave the silent machine which still lay there a wide berth."

"As briefly as possible I gave the assembly the gist of what had been told to me. I was quite frank about the situation and although I knew the the what metal shape was listening to my every word, I showed resistance."

"While I was addressing the crowd, Petruska was busy getting out of our pocket-covered behind gun which I have already mentioned. With the lucky weapon hidden under his coat he slipped to my side."

"It's ready, remember," he whispered.

"I nodded, then murmured, 'We must reach there, people of Drakema, just as the whole of Russia will do.' But in Petruska I trusted."

"My friend whipped the coat off the weapon and, tracing it on the machine, de-

pressed the trigger. A stream of white hot metal rapped through and through the machine till buried in the earth. A colossal electric shock seemed to sweep through it, as though it were really alive, but it was the machinery within being thrown into action. It stopped from the hole, and a hail of bullets came from numerous guns which were thrust out of portals in its walls."

"Men and women standing near fell like ripe corn. With a gasp my two friends Petruska and I lay to the ground. With a bound I was on my feet. Quickly I turned the hidden gun on the machine again, this time the deadly weapon did its work—the machine faltered, spun round, and toppled from its stance legs to the ground. The white hot bullets had found the vulnerable parts of the creature."

★ THE WEST STANDS FIRM

THE professor stopped talking for a moment while he loaded his pipe. Had wanted eagerly for him to continue.

"It's getting late," remarked the professor with a glance at the window clock. "I can see my finger's been running away with me. The machine's been running away with me. I shall compress a great deal of matter, but will be finished, running over a long period, into a few sentences—hah!" with a sigh, "if I can."

"After 'killing' the machine, rapid planning was necessary, for, according to the message I had received, the Mind hoped to take over in a few days. Consequently we decided with other sections of its horse forces, and its decision, was reached within twenty-four hours. We were in a fight and one week before we were already contacted."

"For several weeks the struggle went on, then both Chinese and Russians surrendered to that apparatus to them as the inevitable. I wonder I wonder, I know we could have organized a fight, we had enough Indian guns, but that was the end of the matter. The great weapons are tested and while fresh supplies were being ordered, the Mind machines were destroying whole towns right and left."

"This was being over, I fled out of the East and took a trip to North America, where I spent a great deal of my life and I returned to England."

"And what do you suggest in the present situation, Prof.?" asked Selwyn as the old man finished his meal.

"Just that," and Winter, his voice beginning with enthusiasm, "Again the Mind must be resisted. Modern man and the weapons of fifty years ago, but the Indian gun at the only weapon the Mind fears. I know that."

"At the rate of producing machinery, these devices of weapons could be turned out in quantities sufficient to arm every man in the country within two or three days."

"Then we'll go to the National Safety Department and make them stop this voting," cried Selwyn jumping up his feet. "We'll teach this Mind to live long and out of its filthy pit."

"This is really little more to be said now. Together Winter and Selwyn put their idea to the Government. A firm stand was taken, the Mind was threatened with the Indian gun, and Winter proved he had been quite right in saying the Mind feared the weapon. This is the message which was sent back."

"I, the Mind, speak to the English people again. You present rising opposition has now it to destroy me of the land of my world. So be it. I promised from the event of non-compliance with my suggestion, but I have changed my views. Why should I be bothered with such responsibility, especially on behalf of ungrateful subjects? I shall leave you to follow in your agreement. You will please for my current joy."

At least two men smiled on hearing this statement again.

The Black Vultures

IN THE PAST AGE Pirates were the Terror of the Seven Seas. Here is a story of Pirates of To-morrow, a visionary Tale of raiders from the clouds using all the wonders of modern science and mechanics

* THE VULTURES GO EAST

A VOICE spoke at Zerkow's elbow: "Wait a moment. Why did I hear?" Zerkow turned and looked into the vivacious, smiling face of the slim and four-haired Fales.

"Why should I not kill him?" he demanded. "He is not one of us!"

"No, but he might become one of us," whispered Fales. "Why not give him an opportunity to take the oath of allegiance which will bind him to us, body and soul?"

"He would never take such an oath," retorted Zerkow. "and if he did he would never keep it."

"He would keep it if he took it," said Fales, his pale blue eyes on Derek's face. "He is of that unscrupulous breed which gets its power first. We are hardly in need of more Zerkows."

"Yes, but not this one!" retorted Zerkow.

"And that is where you are wrong, if you will pardon me saying so," retorted Fales. "If we could persuade him to adopt our code of ethics, which I will be bound to be a very useful member. It is not his oath he would never keep us."

"Quite a student of psychology, aren't you?" sneered Zerkow.

"In a humble way, yes," smiled Fales. "But if it comes to a fight between us and the armed forces of law and order, I know whom I would rather have with me, a fellow of this type, or failed, our latest recruit."

"You needn't waste your breath spreading dirt about him," interrupted Derek. "I am answering no oath of allegiance to you blackguards!"

Zerkow ignored him. He lowered the gun, his cruel, thin lips curving into a smile.

"Do you know, Fales, I believe you're right," he said. "Anyway, we'll give the fellow twenty-four hours for reflection. If at the end of that time he refuses to take the oath we can get ourselves of him as easily as we could now."

"Don't be a fool!" snapped Derek. "I'm answering no oath, I tell you."

"Which may come with the passing of the hour," purred Zerkow. "After all, we are offering you a life of adventure, wealth beyond your wildest dreams, and the respectability of men who know no master save me. The alternative is the black and barbed wire of death!"

Glancing the thickly creased face, he pressed a bell. In response to the ring a white-clad steward appeared, and at Zerkow's order Derek was taken to a small but comfortably furnished cabin and the key turned on him.

Flinging himself down on his bunk, Derek lay with head slumped behind his hand, staring up at the low ceiling.

He was in an awkward situation. A member of the British Aeronautical Research Society, he had been assisting Professor Pilger of Basle, in experiments with zero

engines in rarified atmosphere, when the Black Vultures, the modern sky pirates, had swooped down on the town.

Deadly gas bombs had been dropped on to the sleeping town, and then fast black planes, operating from a giant dirigible, had brought the terror down to the landing.

Professor Pilger had been gassed, and lay dead in his bed, but Derek, who had been working late in the laboratory, had managed to get a sneak at it then.

On a sudden impulse, Derek had gone after the pirates, and when the black ships rose from the dead town he had been hanging from the undercarriage of one of them.

But the rare atmosphere in which the dirigible floated had overpowered Derek, and he regained consciousness to find himself in the hands of Zerkow, Master of the Black Vultures.

Only the suggestion of Zerkow's lieutenant, Fales, had saved him from an immediate end.

For this respite from death he was no worldly grateful. But it was only a respite, for it was impossible for him to take such an oath as the leader of the Black Vultures suggested.

It seemed incredible to Derek that he was high in space above the ragged scrub at the ruthless gang who were breaching Europe, and as he lay there he listened with straining ears for sounds of activity aboard the ship.

But nothing broke the stillness save the muffled hum of the powerful engines which were driving the breathless through space, and the faint whirr of the oxygen generating plant.

As a matter of fact, Zerkow and his pilots had already turned in, slowly seeking their cabins and their beds, and it was not until late afternoon was creeping into dawn, that



Sending a smashing uppercut to the man's jaw, Derek leapt on to the deck rail of the dirigible and dropped into space.

The Raid on the Temple of Kio Blu

they resembled in the huge prepatory to dinner.

Throughout the hours they had slept, the sleeping had been drooping upon, and now, at a height of thirty thousand feet, it was craning slowly over the barren wastes and dusky altitudes of Tibet.

"To sleep!" Zoroaster, holding a cigarette and calmly depositing the ash in a nearby ash-tray, "we are going to raid the monastery of Kio Blu. In its riches and wealth millions of pounds' worth of treasure is stored. It is one of the richest lazarouses in the whole of Tibet."

"Yes, and one of the best guarded in this cursed, priest-ridden land," growled the leonard and beak Black Bersing, his second-in-command. "I tell you, I do not like this raid, Zoroaster. We do not want to fall into the traps of the monks."

"Why, what is wrong, Bersing?" demanded Zoroaster, starting. "I have not heard such words of caution from you before."

"No, because we've never attempted a raid such as this before," growled Black Bersing. "If anything goes wrong on a Himalayan raid and we are taken, then we shall be alike shot or hanged. That is a close, quick end. But if anything goes wrong down below here and we fall into the hands of the police, we won't have a stone, stick or nail. No, by thunder, we'll suffer the torments of the damned before we do!"

"But nothing is going to go wrong," replied Zoroaster evenly. "Come, Bersing, this is not like you!"

"No, maybe not," muttered Bersing. "But I know these mountain priests, and know what they are capable of!"

"You need not go on the rack," said Zoroaster quietly.

The little eyes of Black Bersing shined behind their thick, coarse matted of eyes.

"I go where the situation goes," he answered roughly. "But I warn you, Zoroaster, as I were every man here, that if any one of us falls into the hands of the priests, then he will die a thousand deaths before prison comes!"

★THE LOOTING OF A TEMPLE

DENSELY that night in the brilliantly lighted saloon was a hush quite for the moment, and then, thus, after, for the moment, words of Black Bersing were ringing heavily on the minds of those present.

Why the words of warning, anyway? Why hadn't the fellow had the sense to keep his mouth shut instead of dissipating his own and making them uneasy?

Ironically Zoroaster was in a black rage against his bearded second-in-command, but nothing of it showed on his face as he sat in his chair, green eyes.

Should the slightest thing go wrong tonight, he knew, take upon leadership to hold his men together and see the victory through to a glorious conclusion.

He knew as well as did Black Bersing what would be their life should they fall into the hands of those old, shrewd monks who guarded the monastery of Kio Blu.

But that was a risk they had to take. The treasure of Kio Blu was worth any gamble, even though the stake was a dreadful and bloody death.

Slower over, they descended their black flying kit and ascended to the little odd of the flying platform, where their black, bullet-proof fighting planes were waiting.

Zoroaster addressed them. "I am ordering you now to take part in this raid," he said evenly. "Those who come with me voluntarily, and I shall not hold it against a man if he refuses!"

He waited a moment, but not a man moved to speak, then he gave a sharp word of command and they swung themselves up into their cockpits.

A few moments later they were in the air,

plading down through the night towards the dusky, moon-bathed heights below.

On this occasion they had not hesitated their coming by the dropping of gas bombs, for in the age-old and thick walled monastery of Kio Blu there were corridors, cells and vaults where the gas could never penetrate.

Now did they give warning of their coming by scattering to their engines silently, and with gas bombs, fired, they dropped down through the night, and landed in a flash and wind swept plateau about a mile down where the dark and rugged gulf of the monastery curved itself in stark effluence against the moonlit sky.

Leaving Kioel in charge of the machines, Zoroaster led the remaining eight pilots in the direction of the monastery. At the sight of the darkness they found the going bad, for they had to scramble down the ladder-strewn side of a valley and up the opposite side to the monastery they had come to raid.

They managed it without accident, however, and gaining the black shadow of the base of the high-courtyard wall, Zoroaster drew from the pocket of his flying jacket a thin rope ladder fitted with two light and polished steel hooks.

Clipping back, he carefully gauged the distance to the top of the wall, then sat the ladder snaking up into the darkness. The hooks thudded about, but at the third attempt they gripped the top of the wall.

"After me," whispered Zoroaster, "and keep your gaze on your hands!"

Bersing he scaled the ladder, swing one leg across the top of the wall, and threw his arms forward the dark and silent monastery, then dropped lightly down into the blackness of the walled-in garden.

One by one he saw followed him and the whole gang were gathered inside the monastery walls. With a limited word of caution, Zoroaster led the way through the starlit bushes until he felt the hard stone of a path beneath his feet.

The path led to the chambers, at the end of which a solitary ray of light shone through a narrow aperture in the wall. Treacherous tip toe and followed steadily by his men, the leader of the Black Volunteers made towards the light which flashed a heavy door.

"Go on!" whispered Zoroaster. "Gaze and gaze hands ready!"

Swiftly gas masks were adjusted, and each man drew from his pocket a cylindrical object about the size of a cricket ball.

Now the door was fully under way, the vague fears and apprehensions caused by the warning words of Black Bersing were completely forgotten, and even the bearded second-in-command himself felt a strange thrill of anticipation, as among his gas, Zoroaster knocked loudly on the door with the bat.

In response to the summons there came a shudder of unadorned feet on the other side of the door, a slight warbling knock and a face peered out into the blackness of the darkness.

"Who are ye that seek admittance to the treasury of Kio Blu?" demanded the monk.

"A poor wandering pilgrim who purports to hold Kio!" whined Zoroaster from the darkness, thankful that the peering eyes could not see his gas mask against the door. "The way is long, brother, and I would not ask my weary beast awhile!"

"How proved ye admittance through the garden?" demanded the voice suspiciously. "The gate stood open, brother," chorused Zoroaster, "and so I entered to have a poor and worthy offering at the shrine of Kio Blu."

"What is the nature of this poor and worthy offering which ye seek to leave at the shrine of Kio Blu?" asked the voice.

"The darkness and his face mask hid Zoroaster's smile."

"The pitiful ravages of five long and weary years upon blossoming in the mountain fields of Kuang Fu," he answered. "If it be not acceptable, brother, then I will withdraw on my way."

"No offering, however small, is unworthy of this holy shrine of Buddha," returned the monk gravely. "Ye shall enter, pilgrim, and the blessing of Kio Blu shall come unto thy path to holy Kio!"

The shutter in the door was closed, heavy bolts guided in their sockets, a grating chain was lifted, and then the door swung slowly open.

One swift step took Zoroaster to the black-robed and hooded form which stood silent in the doorway.

"Back!" he snarled, throwing his gas mask into the monk's stomach. "After our work, ye cannot even, and it will be your lot!"

★ZOROASTER COMES DOWN

MENACED by that glowering man, and his eyes shining wide with terror, the monk backed into the dark and some-distant passageway behind him.

A few moments later, passed and bowed, he was lying sprawling on the floor and, his green eyes staring to cruel slits, Zoroaster was leading his desperate gang along the passageway to where a great steel staircase led upwards towards heavy curtains.

Reaching Zoroaster before, his hand held up in warning. From beyond the curtains, a low, hoarse and hoarse voice, came the sound of angry voices.

Realizing that behind the curtains was one of the temples of the monastery, Zoroaster gestured to his men to follow, and, stepping up the staircase, pulled the heavy thickets aside.

Strange indeed was the sight which met his gaze. At the far end of the dimly illuminated temple, three gigantic Buddha images lay on the floor, and were lit by the flames of the great incense coils.

Around the base of the Buddha a hundred or more black-robed monks were ranged in a semi-circle, facing a worried and gorgeously-attired abbot, who was seated on a jeweled throne at the feet of the central Buddha.

Moving now with the shattering vision of the monks were the deep, stirring note of an organ, but as Zoroaster stood there staring through the curtains, his men, proceeding at his heels, the abbot rose to his feet with a scowl and lunged out a sharp blade.

"Who are ye that dare defile this sacred temple of holy Kio Blu?" he shouted. "At these, ye priests, at these and how dare you do this!"

Zoroaster laughed, laughed aloud, and in the black-robed monks whirled and lay down on their backs, whipping their great curved swords from beneath their robes, Zoroaster hailed his gas mask to the floor.

It burst with a searing explosion, and as the deadly yellow flames stopped the rush of unadorned feet, Zoroaster's gas mask flung through the dust and ghostly rose.

Choked and blinded, groping in the death throes, the monks sought back in full in pain and huddled huddle in the dark.

Then across the floor of the temple rushed Zoroaster to face from the dying, where his gigantic reason shuddered with gasping sobs of abject pain.

On through corridors and passages he searched, the gas house of his Volunteers clearing the way and firing the shrieking monastery with the yellow mark of death.

On and on until the temple walls were fused, blown open, and piled in a mass of their primitive contents to the mounds could carry.

Then out into the night, every man loaded with jewels and precious stones, the work of which it would be impossible ever to compare.

"What a raid!" laughed Zoroaster excitedly, waving off his gas mask. "Five other raids would have yielded as treasure such as this. What of your loss and your warnings now, Bersing?"

"Ay, let some morning, this night a work will be known throughout Tibet," muttered

Escape from the Pirate Dirigible

Black Berlog, desperately. "We have worked to bury a country of black savages and murderers, Zerkow!"

Jeeringly they laughed him down as triumphantly they bore their look through the gunnery position, cut through the gate which they quickly found, and across the huddled stormy valley to their machines.

Suddenly the treasure was pushed into the cockpit, engines started up, and with a deafening roar the black fighting planes tore forward across the moonlit plains to sail into the night sky.

Zerkow, crouched over his controls, was jubilant. He would get rid of Berlog, Ragsdale, him. The man's nerve was cracking. That was very welcome. Fate would make a better ending to comedy—

Boop! Boop! Boop!

The machine assumed the falling of his engine cut in. He paid shots on Zerkow's thoughts. His glowering eyes glared at him, and, the off-tale pointer was slipping quickly back.

Whipping forward his control stick to drop the nose of his plane and prevent it from stalling, Zerkow joggled frantically with his left hand and throttle.

He was looking bright rapidly and high in the sky above him in Voltaire, screaming at his fate, was screaming up and up towards the flailing eyes.

His thin lips drew back in a wolfish snarl. Zerkow continued his frenzied efforts to clear his engine. That lower and lower he dropped, the explosion of the machine he trapping his presence in any who dared to be within a radius of many miles on the ground below.

The grim words of Berlog flashed into his mind.

"Come moving this night's work will be known throughout Tibet. We have vowed to bury a country of black savages and murderers!"

Yes, to land meant death. Every cursed black-robed priest of Buddha would be searching for him and his men. But he had to look. A moment of ground was very close.

His face a mask of fear and fury, Zerkow leaned forward and watched off his engine. . . .

Probably the latter ending would be more merciful than that aimed out by Zerkow, and, so thinking, Berlog pivoted the ball.

He did not know whether or not anyone would survive that ball, but he had hope, and, to his appalling surprise, the key turned in the lock and a white-powdered streamer inverted his head into the cabin.

The man suspected nothing wrong. Why should he? Who but a madman would think of escape from an airship facing high in space?

He was, therefore, taken completely by surprise when, staring suddenly and curiously from the hatch on which he was seated, Berlog looked down a terrific search light on the point.

Less than ten minutes him he cringed into the corridor, and in the streamer's corners and under jacket. That information, although he felt lying gagged and bound on the hatch, and looking the door behind him, he cut off along the corridor.

Diffidently he passed door after door, making cowardly his cabin No. 2 at the end of the corridor. It was extremely probable that, cabin No. 1 would be Zerkow's, and, looking in, Berlog drew from his pocket the bunch of keys he had taken from the steward.

He was in the first of panic and he knew it, but calmly he tried key after key in the lock until suddenly there came a faint click and the door swung open.

Stepping swiftly inside, Berlog closed the door behind him and grasped for the switch. As his fingers closed on it and the cabin blazed with light, he gave vent to a stifled exclamation of triumph, for peering by the paper screen fluted-topped desk and the charts spread the walls, that was indeed Zerkow's cabin.

Donning a black leather jacket which he found in an extremely stacked wardrobe, Berlog carefully selected one of the four parkies hanging on the walls and arranged it on to his shoulders.

That done, he made a quick examination of the papers on the desk, stuffing a great bundle of them into his pocket. He took possession of two marked charts, then pulling a black peaked cap well down over his eyes and running up his jacket collar about his face, he picked up a heavy anti-

metric he had found in a drawer and gained the cabin.

The trouble was he hadn't the faintest idea as to his bearings, but judging the cabin to be somehow, he took a corridor which appeared to lead towards the starboard pinnace deck.

He was halfway along it when a creak, next step behind him caused him to whirl, and he found himself confronted by a big, broad-shouldered man in the high peaked uniform of the Black Voltaire.

"Who the devil are you?" began the man sharply, then broke off as Berlog's gas was hurried hard into his nostrils.

"Up with your hands!" roared Berlog.

"Quick!"

Madly enough the man's hands went above his head, but his eyes were blazing and a yell of alarm trembled on his lips.

"Open your mouth, just once," growled Berlog, "and I'll blow a hole through you. Now walk!"

Keeping his gas in the fellow's stomach, he turned him round and propelled him back towards the corridor. It emerged on the pinnace deck as Berlog had intended, and propelling the man backwards across the second deck, Berlog suddenly backed his feet, moved the fellow's legs, dropped his gas and smashed home a savage uppercut to the jaw.

With an oath the man staggered back and fell heavily, and before he could recover himself sufficiently to whip his gas from the holster on the belt about his waist, Berlog had leapt on to the deck rail and dropped off into space, his thumb hooked in the release cord of his parachute.

Down found Berlog, brand of face, and took making his way along the ragged wire bottom in which he had landed. Where he was he hadn't the faintest idea, but suddenly he halted dead in his tracks, staring with awed eyes.

For there roared a deadly uttering of rock had scurried the leather clad form of Zerkow!

Lost in the mysterious uplands of Tibet. More amazing adventures in next week's thrilling installment of this great book.

*THE DIVE INTO SPACE

WHILST the raid on the pinnace had been in progress, Derek Oldham, locked in his cabin about the airship, had been turning over in his mind the seemingly impossible problem of escape.

One point he did keep carefully before him and that was that he must either escape or die. It he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the Black Voltaire—and he was determined to refuse—Zerkow would kill him.

He had not the slightest doubt as that point, and consequently it would make very little difference to his ultimate fate if he met his death in trying to escape.

Zerkow took one swift step towards the black robot form. "Back!" he snarled, and thrust his gun savagely into the monk's stomach.



DEVILMAN of the

What mysterious wonders and strange forms of life exist in the unexplored vastness of the ocean depths? Weird monsters brought to the surface by subterranean upheavals have given us a glimpse of what might lie below, and in this startling story our author visualizes an amazing undersea civilization.



clear, and the two scientists hurried on with their preparations.

"First the magnets, Kells. Turn the current off. It can't be strong now as they would have lost their freedom flying. That's all certainly."

Surprising that Devilman didn't think that the tank he played on in his work with current. But maybe he doesn't know about all the possibilities of electricity.

In a few minutes they were ready, and Alci Corwood had returned with the information that he had

switched out everything. Stammers put a look back around, his hand on a switch. It was the switch controlling the air pressure. Kells was manipulating other switches.

"Ready with all the connections, Kells? Good. Let her go!"

He depressed the switch over, and a blue flame spouted from a hose hole. This was followed by a roar that almost deafened them. And then the darkness started.

First they heard the rush of air from the tubes that they vented into the water chamber. It was terrific, that humming of rebounded draught. The pressure was tremendous for it was this air that was used to force back the weight of the changing sea.

It was directed towards the roof, scumming the stalactites and the ceiling in a now-whispering hurricane, and sweeping downward through the passages and into the cavern where the fighting continued. Nothing could stand before that extent of unseen force.

And then Stammers cut off the flow for a second before letting it go free again, and again and again. As he let it flow full over, without interruption. The atmosphere grew hot and heavy and the diving ceased.

"Let's see how it works out there," said Stammers, making a signal to his companions. "Take short breaths and walk without exertion as much as possible."

The pressure was beginning to tell on them, by the time they reached the passage to the water chamber, but they crawled through and lay flat on the ground, gasping but expectant.

In the great chamber they saw the opening before. Sea Flight had obeyed the instructions given him. His eyes had with-drawn from the center of the cave, but the small black fishes were floating into the openings for a change, and behind them, still as he knew, was Devilman, waiting for them.

Up went the tide with a triumph. The rush of air seemed to have slanted, but the weight of the atmosphere was getting greater and greater; and then, just as the tide was rising for the rush a flash of

deathly white light, made the entire cavern. It was so brilliant that the three men were blinded for the moment, and covered their faces.

Hardly had that moment flash struck the air when there came a deafening roll of thunder. It rolled from room to floor and rolled back again and again, reverberating and growing steadily.

Again a dark burst forth, more brilliant than the first, and this time through the chamber there came gifts of energy and desire and a sense of pain.

Lightning zigzagged everywhere, and the path of thunder came so quickly on the heels of the flashes that they merged with the light.

Color and effect were one thing in that turmoil in which human eyes could not see and human ears were deceived and could no longer hear. It was a thunder and lightning storm confined in a space in which cracks of rock could be heard and the ground heaved. The walls of the cavern trembled in that aerial catastrophe of light and sound.

The three men felt sick and dizzy, and Stammers reached his companions and signaled to them to crawl back to the machine room with him. They kept on their hands and knees, making their way with difficulty, but at last they reached the passage leading to the control room, and found it looking much the same.

Stammers entered the control room and turned off the air control, then flung up the curtain that cut off the electricity.

They sat there, holding their heads for the blows now passing on their brains and covering their faces and discomfort.

Gradually the air became fresher, they were able to breathe easily; but still from the great cavern they heard the growling of thunder.

Presently through the passage the tall black men standing and roared their anger about the passages and paths in clouds. At the tail of the procession came Sea Flight, who advanced towards the three men with signs of exaltation.

"Do you command the elements of the earth, friend?" he asked of Stammers in a whisper.

"How has it worked out, Sea Flight?" "I obeyed your instructions. I saw my men die when the water began. Come and look for yourselves at the effect of your warning."

The thunder had quieted now, the lighting had ceased in the cavern, but every where the effect of the tempest Stammers and Kells had let loose was apparent.

In every direction the blackened, shuddered bodies of Devilman's slaves lay beside their buried spears. They had been struck down by the lightning that had smothered them in rays. The tide with which they had thought to command victory had acted as rock for the chamber floor to pass through these made as flame waves along a fuse.

There was an sign of Devilman in that battlefield.

"I hoped when I constructed a lightning storm," said Stammers, "that it would have been one of the victims. Where has he gone?"

"He and some of his blacks were seen to run for the passages across the cave," replied Sea Flight. "Never have I heard such noise, although I have lived through several earthquakes. Look at the sea wall!"

★ WHITE MAN'S MAGIC

ONE of the strange creatures of the deep came leaping along the narrow passage from the water cave and gripped out a message.

The fish man who had spoken to Kells gave a sign to his fellows.

"Forward! The Prince needs us!"

He looked eagerly at Kells again. "The tide of the blacks are taking toll of our army," he said quietly. "You have done so much for the Prince that it would mean everything to have your weapons for a little longer."

But, before Kells could answer, Stammers' voice came from the interior of the control room swiftly.

"Take this message from me to the Prince. Tell him that the weapons we possess are nothing to what we shall use now. Tell him to withdraw his troops from the black who has heard the thunder in the air of the water cave."

The blacks saluted and departed with his men, and Stammers turned to the array of switches and dials around the walls of the control room. Kells and Corwood saw him hovering over the dials and noting connections, turning his eyes over this and that lever and apparatus.

"Here, Alci, take this cable, here the end of it, and carry it into the cave where they are fighting. Slavery! And take this one with you, too. Come back as soon as you have hung the cable on some projecting rock."

He smiled at Kells as the latter raised his eyebrows.

"Come on, Kells, give a hand. We can successfully something that will save Devilman and his second wives still!"

For a moment Kells did not understand, but a word from Stammers made everything

Black Demons of the Deep

It was split from top to bottom, and the sea was trickling through.

Sea Flight smiled again, seeing their escape.

"That will be repaired early enough, friends. The refrigerating apparatus will be

DEEP

put into operation and the cracks frozen up, but we shall be the ocean clean the battlefield first. The sharks that Devilfish caught will come, and the creatures of the depths will follow. We will close the gates and retire to an upper cave for rest."

Abel Cornwell yawned and stretched himself.

"I could sleep for weeks," he said, "— in I rate for a bed somewhere before we start the trail for South America. . . . Though a tramp of a hundred miles is nothing to what we've been through already."

* CAPTURED BY FISH-MEN

BULWER KELLS stretched his arms before his head and yawned.

He was just emerging from one of the deepest slumps he had ever enjoyed and he had roused himself only on board the ship that had borne him on the expedition of discovery to the South Atlantic.

A glance round showed him that he was in a rock cavern and that he was lying on a bed of whale-shin with an air machine for his pillow. Beside him, just awaking also, was his friend Cornwell, who had been with him on the other side of St. Lawrence by Abel Cornwell, their contact.

And then the questions of their situation came back to Kells. He remembered how the three of them had come to the sea bed in their diving goggles and had entered the city of the full sea who dwell in the depths of the ocean.

He remembered the cave in which they lay as it was in which Prince des Fleurs, his friend, who had brought them there, the battle with the forces of the monster, Devilfish. They had eaten strange food, they had obtained complete rest, and now the promise that had been made to them was about to be fulfilled. They were to be shown a passage under the sea by which they might travel to earth again.

On a rock table, taken from a wrecked ship no doubt, lay the dishes from which they had eaten. Beside the dishes lay a map which Sea Flight had supplied, a diagram of the submerged mountain range, and the passage they were to travel.

Kells rose and yawned again. He never felt tired in his life. The food he had been given had been followed by a message by one of the fish-men, and there was not a sign of the surface in his heads which he had seldom passed after their first adventures.

He bent over the diagram which had been drawn roughly with the stump of a piece of charcoal on the white skin of a shark's throat. The direction of the passage was marked with considerable accuracy, even to the four cardinal points of the compass, but of what use were these four cardinal points to men six miles below the sea?

Beside the diagram he noticed that a small pocket compass had been laid on the table. He took it up and looked at it, then laid it down again. The needle was behaving strangely. It would not remain steady, but kept moving violently all round the compass.

Are you satisfied with the route, Kells?

Cornwell had risen also, and Abel Cornwell was staring.

"Oh, the route," replied Kells. "That seems plain enough. According to what Sea Flight said, we must travel fairly deep

into the lower regions of the Earth. There is one point where the pressure of the air draughts cannot keep back the flood of the sea, and we shall have to wade through that portion in our diving dresses. After that it is a constant rise. I wonder where we shall emerge?"

"Probably on some part of America no man has ever trod before, Kells. Indeed, I should not be surprised if we came out in the bed of one of the wide rivers of the interior. Sea Flight told us that we were to get final directions from him when we awoke. Here comes his messenger, if I am not mistaken."

The whale-like creature of the cave had been stowed and a fish man had entered. He had slipped in so quietly that they did not hear the soft pad-pad of his motionless feet. Now he bowed elaborately.

"I have been sent for you, Earthmen," he said in a high-pitched tone. "Are you ready to follow me?"

"Sea Flight told us that he would return to us," said Stannard. "We were to receive provisions—"

"Everything will be provided, Earthmen. I advise you to hurry."

In a few minutes they had buckled on their arms. They passed out of the cave behind their guide, and just as they emerged they were trapped.

It came so swiftly that they had no time to defend themselves. Small black fish men, the little demons of the underworld, they had previously met and recognized, surrounded them and bore them to the ground. Secret hands were laid on their mouths, stifling their cries; but as Stannard fell he brought down the fish man who had trapped him. His arm circled the creature's neck.

His fingers tightened and found the thin backbone where it joined the spine head. He gave a twist in the head and the fish man lay dead beside him.

But any further resistance was useless. Their guns were stripped from their shoulders and thrown aside, though they did not release them of their revolvers. They did not liked them, either, but two of the captives kept a grip on each one of the captives and, making a sign for them to rise, laid them off down the steep slope that was lit by lamps at intervals.

As they went, the men saw here and there the hidden bodies of the other fish men who were the armies set by Sea Flight. They had been overcome and strangled by the blacks.

In a passage in the seemingly solid wall they were forced, a rock sliding open to receive them and dropping into place behind them. This passage was dim and mysterious, and set with the queer flow of the sea.

The ground was slippery and covered with weed that was at least a foot deep; small creatures like crabs scuttled out of their way, and snake-like bristly scorpions, which long downed up the walls and slid into holes in the rock. The atmosphere became warm, much to the men's surprise, and in what

Earthmen and fish-men were caught in the grip of the strange stream that flowed upwards instead of down, and were swept out of the world of mystery and illusion.



Mysterious Illusions of the Depths

seemed to be a considerable distance there was the glow of a fire.

The passage widened as they advanced until it became a roadway, irregular and boulder-strewn, and the roof ascended in sharp slopes until these seemed to be no roof at all.

At intervals the black fishes were passed by others until they became a crowd of perhaps a hundred, on the sides of which the captives cowered.

Stannero became conscious that his arms were no longer being held by the hands of those form black. The ceiling of their gully, however, was still held by his wrists. He saw that Kells, who walked beside him, and Cornwell, who was a step in front, were also released. He halted suddenly to find the reaction of the blacks. It came at once.

One of them stopped up and placed his snaky head on the edge of Stannero's neck, pawing the skin.

"Is it better to go alone to Devilman than to go without your sons?" he asked in his guttural tone.

"Oh, so it is Devilman you are taking us to?"

"None else."

"And that father fishman who entered our cave—was he your prisoner, or just a common trader?"

"He was one of us, in the pay of Devilman, who knows how to reward as well as how to punish."

"What reward can Devilman give?"

"Life!"

The snake head pinched Stannero's neck sharply. He asked no more questions, and shaking off the slithering fingers, continued the march.

Kells and Cornwell had set their feet in the irregular, but their hands were on their knees where they held their prisoners, waiting for a word from their leader to use them.

But Stannero did not give that word, either by example or sign. His scientific knowledge was greater than that of either of his companions. Already he had perceived a new sensation that seemed to deny everything he had held as fact. He was looking ahead and he could hardly believe his eyes.

The road on which they stood seemed to vanish as a road. The rocks around them seemed to vanish as rocks. There was a movement as if they faced a nothing of all manner and dimension. Was that the darkness he saw ahead, that wall of gentle but unceasing density that stirred and melted before him?

Even as he gazed at the confused blending of things ahead, a strange thing happened. Mechanically capture and captive had taken a step forward. Or was it a step? There ought indeed to increase suddenly, so that their bodies were a burden and a labor. They staggered ahead, fish-men almost crawling, Earthmen bending their shoulders as if little hands were heavy with an invisible weight.

"Kells," cried Stannero, "what do you make of it?"

But Kells did not answer at once. He too, had seen the blending of things in front, the various nature of what seemed to be seen and heard. Were they stepping towards a dead world, a place whose time was no reality, and all was in motion?

Down a steep slope they almost fell, the black fishmen sliding on their hunches, the Earthmen slipping and tripping. Down they went still deeper, while the air became a moist and warm fog that seeped here from the crevices of a tropical forest. And then the world was lifted from them as suddenly as it had come.

They took a score of steps on narrow ground lifting their heads high once more. The vision of the melting, confused world had passed. Was it caused by darkness in that subterranean area? They had never felt the strangeness before.

But again something happened. Their

next steps were not steps at all, but leaps they could not control—they rushed first to later steps and found they were entering an space, coming down to earth a dozen yards or so ahead of their last position.

"What's the matter with things?" growled Abel Cornwell. "The world isn't steady any more!"

* MOLTEN CHAOS

NOW they had entered a region in which they kept leaping forward.

Were they in a cave? They did not know. There was no roof above their heads. There was light, a strange light that came from nowhere and spread its strange, waddy radiance about them; and beyond, still glimmering in the distance, was that far they did not seem to approach.

Everything seemed fresh and uncut. Plants of weird shapes grew here and there. No more animals could be seen, no crabs, no herds, as life of any description except the abnormal growths of green, silver, red, and yellow things that hung in space rather than grew.

There was no repetition of any growth. Not a single bit of the webbed of growth was duplicated anywhere. Every creature was individual and without relation to forms outside it. The black fish-men were on their feet as the scene, finding it as if they were used to it; but no longer lay laid more were more exhausting on them than on their captives. They found a circle round the three men and remained standing, breathing heavily.

"I can't make anything of it, Stannero," said Kells at last, as he gazed around at the fading mystery that changed before them. "That it is, indeed—but it is too impossible to contemplate."

"No it isn't, Kells," answered Stannero. "No, it isn't. I can guess what you are thinking. I am sure it is the right thing. Are we standing here or are we floating?"

Cornwell pulled out his chest and raised his head. "To be sure, to be sure, I feel as if it could float. But before we moved another inch the hands of the fish men fell on the floor."

"That settles it," cried Kells. "We are entering a bit of the earth below the sea where gravitation is suspended for some reason."

"And that reason," said Stannero, "is that we have penetrated the dead state of atoms and electrons. Nature was right after all. It is the very foundation of the world we are approaching—that state of formation when atoms are not atoms and fields are not fields. They are both of the same kind—both moving in the same way of thought. This is the state of the world at its beginning—without form and void!"

As he spoke his comrades looked at him, knowing that he had said what was in their minds. They were approaching the centre of the world perhaps—a mobile centre, a moving point that was, not yet formed in the ether crust had been formed.

Here, where they stood, was a featureless world, if it was a world at all. Here they were seeing the terrible truth that scientific discovery had only lately dared to put forward as a venture—that atoms and electrons did, not more by any known law, but were born and died and grew.

The scientific taught that they were processes. They taught that they were surrounded by queer fish men, the like of whom no man had ever seen before. They forgot that they were deep in the bowels of the earth, far below the bed of the swiftest deep Atlantic stream. Their interest was fixed on the creation that was taking place about them. For that was what was happening.

Creation as in the beginning? The world without form and void? There, in front of them, they saw what no human being might hope to see and live. They themselves were the development of millions of years, the

ment advanced intelligence of May; and they were faced with the formless foundations of the world that had been so from everlasting time.

They were facing nothing that was solid. All was a surging. Even as they looked there now that the great forms had changed above and were being converted into something else. The rocks that had loomed about them were changing shape, too. The ocean was there and yet it was not there.

In front of them a vast red began to show in the ground. It widened and widened until it became a gulf that surrounded to cut the ground from their feet; and then it changed and flowed in another direction, so that they did not know if they had ground under their feet or not.

They were floating, yet standing at the same time. Gravitation had suspended operation of its law down there. They were solid themselves, so were their captives, but nothing else was solid, and weight had no meaning.

Overall of the heat learned, was the most structure of them all except the atoms, like remained invisible in face of that monstrous nothing, that red-white chaos that surrounded them. But Cornwell's mind, if it did not see it, the higher force, was able to perceive the things of which he was separated.

"The red chaos!" he breathed, and drew his scientific revolver.

Stannero and Kells turned to him, then their eyes looked in the direction in which Cornwell stared.

They saw the figure of Devilman come into sight beyond a forming clump of vegetation. Evidently, they all three had their revolvers on him.

"I will see bullets here in this state of nothing!" Kells said slowly.

Without waiting for an answer the three fired at the figure of the monster. The pattern of the triggers was followed by not three reports, but double those, and then more.

Devilman's form remained in the same position. He did not seem to be aware that he was being fired at. What was the meaning of all this high-pressure matter? He did not seem to be aware of it.

At that moment the black fish-men moved, still facing their prisoners to move with them. What seemed to be a river of atoms had passed on at least as those. The figure of Devilman had vanished in the dissolving mass of things. But the men, who carried automatic Stannero and Kells by the fact that it was flowing upward, not downward.

The foremost fishmen raised their feet to step towards their brink, and a moment later they were standing upward. The ground seemed to lift on every side, and the three men fell on their backs into an extraordinary world, and found themselves shooting across a rim that carried them as if they were on a moving slide.

Boulder came in their way which at the moment glided off against lake space or floated aside. A choking sensation caught at their throats, but they could not stop the gliding movement on which they had started. For some time this movement continued, as if then at last they felt they were in a condition of gravitation again. The earth began to form, they seemed to move on the sealess stream, their feet could again hold to earth and keep them erect.

They were in a cavern again, or rather a tunnel of immense length, to which there seemed to be no end, but the one differed from the other they had seen in the subterranean world.

Rocky barriers rose high above them. There was no vegetation, but there were crawling things, things that were neither fish nor animal. Many of them were small, and the fish-like took on them or hid behind them with no other intention. Some were head-shaped, some were tail-shaped, some were

Battle in the Cave of Gold

And something else caught the glare of that violet torch and flashed back a blinding gleam of blinding colors. "Here it is," Kells said, brandishing the gold in a corner. Stannum lifted one of those crystals, a piece as big as his fist. It was a diamond!

He examined it closely, hardly willing to believe his eyes. But it was true. There before their eyes were heaps of the precious stones, one of which was worth wealth untold in the open world. The hole now was a treasure chamber to the party of the availed of these.

"Worth! No man could compute the earthly value of even one heap of these. Monte Cristo was a pauper in comparison with the wealth lying in Stannum's palm."

The cave was an inexhaustible gold mine; the gems were Aladdin's dozen times true.

Stannum turned to his companion, brother of the gesture of Devlin, who watched his face eagerly.

"We are in the world's gem factory," he said simply. "The enormous load below the volcano turns the surface of the rocks into diamonds, and this cave is the hidden gold that has run in liquid state to a common level."

"Well!" whispered Devlin, tongue-tied. "Well? What do you say, Kells?" "You cannot save your treasures in your cave. My fist now demands them. But all this is yours if you accept my offer. It is a bargain!"

The whisper was the very spirit of temptation, the voice of cunning. Devlin's face looked heated in that moment. The forest and where Cornwall's bullet had caught him in the forehead in their previous encounter grew vivid. He was the very devil then, without a trace of man about him.

Stannum glanced towards the other man when the black shadows crowded at the entrance. He seemed to be weighing the proposition in his mind. His glance rested on Kells, then on Cornwall, flattered as their faces as if he was listening their friendship against the temptation.

"Kells," he said deliberately, "and you, Cornwall, know that diamonds are the hardest of stones. They can cut glass, their edges can reflect weapons—"

He walked across the golden ore as if to examine a wall. Devlin stepped softly behind him, watching him eagerly, trying to read the answer.

"Well," he cried slowly, "Stannum whirled and dashed towards the torch, taking it from its socket."

"Here is my answer!" he cried. "Kells! Cornwall! The other two! The diamonds! Hand them at the black!"

His voice took Devlin off his guard. The flaming torch flashed in the monster's face, struck him between the eyes, forced his back against the gold wall, scattering in pain, his eyes starting at his eyes which were blinded with the white flame.

And while Stannum stalked and stalked with that terrible weapon, that swished the leathery hide of Devlin and burned his face and necker bands so that he dashed blindly about the glittering sea vainly trying to escape, Kells and Cornwall had started their attack also.

"They began to throw the rough diamonds with terrible effect. The hard gems could not miss the target, for the blacks were crowded by the entrance. They stumbled backward over each other as more stones followed."

And then Kells leaped into the first cave, tore the big torch up and ran towards the door, waving it and threatening it at those blacks who made no effort to stop his progress.

The screams of Devlin rose through the cave again, and Stannum's voice rose again and again in echo. Cursing had been switched with cursing; and the Kellers had formed the talon by their spears, braves and rifles raised.

"Stannum! Stannum!" roared Kells. "The way is clear!"

"Come, Kells!"

Devlin could no longer see his face. The three had waved his face and hands and he crunched in a corner expressing a spray and spitting fire like a beast.

Out from the golden ore leaped Stannum, waving his torch, but the way had been cleared only for a second. The river of the blacks had brought others from the valley below, and with them came scores of the yellow dogs. They carried infants, which they began to kill.

"Curse! Where are you?" cried Stannum, but Cornwall had disappeared. And now he came, carrying the gun which had been thrown down at Devlin's feet. His pockets were full of diamonds, which he still threw at the center of the crowd.

He stopped throwing and raised his gun, firing rapidly at the oncoming hordes. Kells and Stannum in their weapons in their right hands, but still covered their bodies.

"Back to the forest!" roared Stannum, and they turned and ran along the path they had been taught as prisoners.

The yellow dogs were fast in their feet than the black hordes. They came on all four, glombling creatures that appeared as the pursued, but the Kellers were faster still, and the yellow dogs in the rapid run.

Spikes were still being hurled and the pursuit continued, but the three men stayed their fight at the entrance to the tunnel to turn and let loose a final volley that swept the foreman of their pursuers back; and then they plunged headlong into the night.

* SKA FLIGHT INTERVIEWS *

STANNUM threw his torch away and clamped his hands about so that the light might not indicate their movements. They passed forward into the darkness, but he beheld them. They heard the clattering spade of their spades, and soon they were conscious of the same tightness in their bodies as they had experienced on their way into the depths.

Up from the ground there arose the same shapes of formless fire they had seen a few hours before, the same living dead things. The men breathed them from their path, but they grew more numerous than before. They arose out of the darkness and impeded their feet, clinging to their legs with the tenacity of form and order plants.

Not a sound came to their ears in that vast space. They could no longer tell whether they were in a tunnel or standing in a plain. Cornwall produced a small flash lamp which they turned back and those about them, then upward.

They could not see any roof, they could not see any walls, only a stretch of twilight darkness, and on every side the ward form, shape and moving.

"Listen!" whispered Kells.

They stretched their ears, but no sound came to them.

"I thought I heard a rustle somewhere," he said in a low tone.

"They intend again. Not a sound. They might have been on the lead of the sea."

"I had a good look at that dogman Sea Flight gave us, went on Kells. "I have had it in my mind ever since we were captured. The way to the passage was in this direction, I believe."

"Even if it was," replied Stannum, "we couldn't hope to escape that way. We had to make through a submarine channel. Sea Flight promised to us doing this."

He dropped the flashlight at his feet. Something had moved out of his line then. There was no doubt about it.

A shiver, shiver just then. Kells moved out as an arrow started his body. He saw in front of his face a headless thing with red tentacles and a pincered, gaping mouth, a mouth that tried to follow as he ran.

At the same moment Stannum cried out, "The forest! The forest!"

The yellow dogs!

Thousands were of an use just then. The dogs had crept up on their trail, perhaps being able to see in the twilight as white flames were could not distinguish them. Around the three men was a circle of those dreadful yellow black snakes, and the attack had begun.

From far above the vastness of space came the shrill piping of the black fish-men, and at the sound the dogs altered their speeds apparently as signals.

Back to back the three men stood to fight off the creatures. They saw them from their bodies and looked down with their feet, but the dogs had crept up on their trail, and the men had never seen before.

Instead of crawling on the ground these dogs were taking flying leaps, launching themselves like bats through the air. They came from under the forest vegetation, appeared on all four, then rose as birds rose, sprouting out their tentacles and snapping at the men's heads.

"What's behind?" gasped Cornwall. "We can't keep this up much longer, so."

A small cry had come from the darkness opposite Kells. This was not the cry of the blacks, which the men were now able to distinguish, it was the sad elemental howl of the bigger blacks, and as the cry flowed through space a wind arose and blew past the struggling crowd.

Suddenly the pressure of the yellow men relaxed. Those that had been clinging to the three men dropped. The piping they had kept up ceased, but in its place there were other cries.

The whole area of the road was filled with whirling feet. An army of thousands swept out of the gloom, and a voice the three men knew well came above the din.

"Kellers!" it was. "I—Sea Flight! Stay where you are, my friends!"

He swung round and tossed his battle pole, and was lost in the darkness. From every side came the cries of his fish-men as they swept forward during the brief lull before they came again.

The voice of the battle swept onward while the three listened in surprise and relief to the voice of Sea Flight directing operations.

And then, as rapidly as the fight had begun, it ceased. Up the path came the form of a man, the victory, Sea Flight at their head.

"You came just in time, Sea Flight," and Stannum, as he held out his hand. "Thank heaven for the better of us."

"Not one of those left here," said the Prince. "We have slain them all, and the blacks too. They were the agents that Devlin used to cover this picture of darkness, to find you and bring you back. I organized a search for you as soon as I was aware that you had been trapped. Devlin was still alive and his troops of the other direction, but could not find you, and of the volcano which he had strangled. Could I do but that could find you after all you have done for me?"

"Prince," said Kells, "just where are we now? I studied the diagram you left but we must have gone off the track—there was a belt of space where gravitation does not seem to exist."

"That's my friend, in the belt you will however to gain the passage I promised. It carries you a mile deeper than where we stand and when you reach the river below you begin to ascend the passage. If there is anything you wish to take with you, please tell us. You have lost your ship and your diving goggles—"

But when got something that will help them, as they are now there."

"I brought a handful of those with me to compensate to, and I think we're as rich as millionaires."

He devised his belt in his pocket and held out to their view a ball of the magenta-colored diamonds from Devlin's treasure cave.

More thrills and strange wonders in next week's long story of the Devlin of the Deep.

